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THE Protestant Resolved: OR A DISCOURSE Shewing the UNREASONABLENESS Of his Turning Roman Catholick FOR SALVATION.

The Second Edition.

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No Neceſſity for a Proteſtant *to turn* Roman Catholick *for Salvation.*

WE are all I hope thus far argeed, That *ſincere Chriſtianity* is the ſure *Way* to *Salvation*. That to be *ſaved*, we muſt have the *Hearts*, and not content our ſelves with the bare *Name* and naked *Profeſſion* of *Chriſtians*. That the *Authority* of *God* and *Divine Truth*, and no *worldly* or *carnal* Concern muſt ſway and govern our whole *Converſation*. If we be not religious in good *earneſt*, reſolving and endeavouring to honour God in *Heart* and *Life*, according to the Holy *Goſpel* of our Bleſſed *Jeſus*, it's no matter to us what *Religion* we profeſs, or to what *Church* we join our ſelves. *Wickedneſs* and *Hypocriſy*, through what *Church* ſoever our Way lieth, lead aſſuredly to *Hell*. A wicked *Proteſtant* and a wicked *Papiſt* will in *Hell* be of the ſame *Communion*.

True *Chriſtianity* is none other but that which was taught at firſt by *Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles*, and all they who *believe* and *live* according to their *Doctrine* ſhall be *ſaved*. Herein again we are all I ſuppoſe agreed. And if ſo, I think it very reaſonable we ſhould agree as well in that which I now add. It is not material to enquire whether a Man be of the Church of *Rome*, or of the Church of *England*, to find whether or no he may be ſaved; but he that would ſatisfy himſelf of the poſſibility of *Salvation* in the *Way* wherein he now is, ought to enquire whether he *believe* and *live* according to the *Doctrine* taught by *Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles*; ſeeing they who do this are good *Chriſtians*, what other *Names* ſoever Men may beſtow upon them, and all that are *ſuch* ſhall be *ſaved*. If

therefore I may be able to ſatisfy my ſelf that I *believe*, and *live* according to the *Doctrine* deliver'd by *Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles*, I have no reaſon to doubt of the *Poſſibility* of my *Salvation* in the *Way* wherein I *now* am, tho it were ſo, that I had never heard to this day of any ſuch Thing as a *Church* headed by a *Pope* or *Biſhop* of *Rome*. And I am yet ſomewhat confident that a Man may *believe* and *live* according to the *Doctrine* of *Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles*, and never hear of a *Biſhop* of *Rome*; becauſe once Men certainly did ſo, and yet were *ſaved*.

The *next* thing therefore that I have to do, is to enquire by what *Means* I may certainly know, what was the *Doctrine* of *Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles*; for by the ſame *Means* whereby this may be known, I may alſo know the certain *Way* to *Salvation*. If there be no ſuch *Means* left us, we are all Fools in profeſſing a *Religion*, the certain *Doctrine* whereof can by no means be known. If ſuch *Means* there be, there muſt be ſome certain *Records* ſafely convey'd down from *their* Time to *ours*; for by what other *Means* we at this diſtance of ſo many hundred years ſhould be certainly inform'd what they taught, is by me unconceivable. Theſe *Records* then are to be diligently ſearched into, and impartially examined, and whoſoever is found to *believe* and *practiſe* according to the *Doctrine* in thoſe *Records* contained, may be concluded to be in the *Way* to *Salvation*.

Such certain *Records* we have, even the *Books* of the holy *Evangeliſts* and *Apoſtles*, which (together with the *Books* of the *Old Teſtament*) we call the *Holy Scripture*. In this we are all again unamimous, both *Papiſts*, and *Proteſtants* agree, that the *Doctrine* in theſe *Books* contained is the *Doctrine* of *Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles*, and *Divine Truth*. Whence it certainly follows, that whatſoever *Doctrine* is contrary to the *Doctrine* contained in theſe *Books*, whether it it be taught by *Papiſts* or *Proteſtants*, is to be *rejected* as none of the *Doctrine* of *Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles*. It ought not therefore to ſatisfy me, that *this* or *that* Doctrine is taught by

by the *Church of Rome*, or by the *Church of England*; for by which of them ſoever it be taught, if it be found contrary to the *Doctrine* of the *holy Scripture*, it is by the Conſent of both *Churches* to be *rejected*. Now ſeeing we *Proteſtants* take this *holy Scripture*, and it *only*, for the *Rule* of *Faith* and *Life*; it is certain, that holding to this *Rule*, we do not *err* either in *Belief* or *Practice*: while on the other ſide we cannot be ſure, thot they do not *err* in *both*, who receive another *Rule*; till it appear that the other *Rule* which they receive, is as *true* and *certain as ours* is acknowledged to be. *Our part* of the *Rule*, and that which indeed we take to be the *whole*, being granted us; all the *Queſtion* is about *their part* of it. *Ours* is on all hands granted to be moſt *ſure* and *certain*, *theirs* alone remains diſputable; and therefore I cannot yet ſee any reaſon, why I ſhould think *their* Way *ſafer* than *our own*, except it can be *ſafer* to follow an *uncertain* than a *certain Rule*, which I think no body will be ſo hardy as to affirm.

The *Rule* which they of the *Roman Communion* advance againſt *ours*, is that of *Tradition*. I am therefore next to to conſider, *Firſt*, what they underſtand by it: And, *Secondly*, what greater *reaſon* I can find to perſwade me, that it is *ſafer* to truſt to it, whether *ſingly*, or in *Conjunction* with *our own*, than *to our own alone*, which is the holy *Scripture*.

This *Tradition* conſiſts of ſuch Doctines of *Faith* and *Practice* as are ſuppoſed to have been taught either by *Chriſt* himſelf, or being dictated by the *Holy Ghoſt* to his *Apoſtles*, were delivered by them to the *Church*, not in *Writing*, but in *Word* only, and ſo have ſucceſſively been handed down from *Father* to *Son*, unto the preſent *Age*. And theſe are *all* according to the *Council* of *Trent* to be received with *equal affection of* Piety *and* Reverence, *as the holy Scripture*.

Now I confeſs, if it may appear as *evidently* to me that *Chriſt* or his *Apoſtles* left ſuch *Doctrines* to the Cuſtody of the *Church*, of equal *neceſſity* to the *Salvation* of Chriſtians, with

thoſe that are *written* in the *Scripture*, as it doth that they left us theſe which are *written* in the *Scripture*; and if I may be well aſſured, that *theſe* very *Doctrines* which the *Church* of *Rome* now holds, and pretends to an *Authority* of *impoſing* upon all *Chriſtendome*, are indeed the very *ſame* which were at firſt (as aboveſaid) deliver'd to the *Church*, I can ſee no reaſon why I ſhould not be bound to *believe* the *one* as firmly as the *other*. For ſeeing it is the *Authority* of the firſt *Preachers* of it, and not barely the *Writings* of it, that bind me to *believe* the *Doctrine*; if I can be equally aſſured, that as well what is *unwritten* as what is *written*, was preach'd by them, as *neceſſary* to the *Salvation* of Mankind, I muſt needs alſo own an *equal Obligation* upon me to believe them *all* alike.

But *neither* of theſe could I ever ſee clear'd, nor can I conceive any hope that I ſhall hereafter. And ſeeing the *proof* of both lies wholly upon *them*, who *affirm* both; I cannot be obliged to *believe* them, till by ſuch *proof* they have *convinced* me. In the mean time, it ſeems enough to me, that *God himſelf* was pleas'd to ſignifie to the World his *Will* in *writing*, which I cannot imagine why *He* ſhould do, had he not intended we ſhould learn his *Will* from what is *written*, and not from any *unwritten Tradition*. And I am the more confirm'd in this Opinion by this, that he did not uſe *this* way of revealing his Mind unto Men at the *firſt*, nor till after the World had had a very long time to diſcern by *experience* the Unfaithfulneſs of *unwritten Tradition*. So that *this* and ſome *other Conſiderations* whereupon the *Papiſts* uſe to ground their *Arguments* againſt both the *Neceſſity* and *Perfection* of the *Scripture*, ſeem to me very fully to evince both the one and the other; and ſo to leave no room at all for their *unwritten Traditions* as any *part* of the *Rule* of *Faith* and *Life*.

Yet, ſeeing they, who are always preaching this *Doctrine* to us, That *there is no* Salvation *for them that are not of their Communion*, preach it not as a *private Opinion* of their own,

or

or of ſome few others in that *Communion*; but as the generally received *Doctrine* of that *Church*, which pretends to be no leſs than *Infallible*; it concerns me ſo much the more to uſe all poſſible diligence, to find out what *Truth* there may be in this *Aſſertion*. And that, not only becauſe I ſhall thereby diſcern the neceſſity of changing my *Religion* to make ſure of my own *future Happineſs*; but alſo, becauſe the *Determination* of this one *Point* will at once put an end (as it ſeems to me) to all the *Diſputes* that are now between the *Papiſts* and *Us*. If I can find it *true, that no Man can be ſaved out of that Communion*, I ſhall be a Fool to trouble my ſelf with the Study of the *Scriptures*, and ſeeking out for my ſelf in *them* a *Way* to *Heaven*; when I may be ſure, by ſtepping over the Threſhold out of the *one Church* into the *other*, to meet with an *Infallible Judg*, whom if I do but follow, I cannot go amiſs. And to diſpute any longer with my ſelf, whether I ſhould do ſo or not, would but ſhew me fitter for *Bedlam* than for any *Church*; ſeeing none but the *maddeſt* Man alive would *diſpute* for *Damnation*. On the other ſide, if I ſhall find it *falſe, that a Man cannot be ſaved out of that Communion*, I muſt needs be convinced that the *Roman Church*, which hath determined it for a certain *Truth*, hath already err'd both in *Faith* and *Charity*, and that having *erred*, ſhe is not *Infallible*: and being not *Infallible*, by her own *Confeſſion* cannot be that *One*, *Holy*, *Catholick* and *Apoſtolick Church*, out of which there is no *Salvation*. So that as this *Aſſertion* of that *Church* ſhall be found to be, *true* or *falſe*; even ſo will the *Popiſh Religion* appear alſo to be.

But here I meet with a very great *Difficulty* in my way, as I am going to ſeek out the *Truth* or *Falſhood* of this *Aſſertion*; that however I may be able to ſatisfy *my ſelf*, yet I ſhall never (for ought I can ſee) be able to ſatisfy *them* who are the *Authors* of it, any other way, than by a total *Submiſſion* of my own *Judgment* and *Conſcience* too to their *Determination*, and a *blind* Obedience to their *Will*. The *Diſpute*

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(as is evident) is between two *Churches*, the *one* whereof challengeth to it ſelf the big-ſwoln *Prerogative* of being the *Lady* and *Mother* of all *Churches*; a *Sovereign Authority* of *preſcribing* to the *Faith* of all Chriſtians; the *Right* and incommunicable *Priviledg* of being the *Sole* and *Infallible Judg* of all *Controverſies* in Religion; finally, an unqueſtionable *Power* of *defining* and *declaring* to all the World the *true* and *only Terms* of *Salvation*. Now, that this *Roman-Mother* and *Miſtreſs-Church*, ſole *Commandreſs* and *Infallible Judg*, having already in the *fulneſs* of *Power* determin'd it, and by her *Supreme Authority* impoſed an *Oath* upon her *Subjects* to maintain it, *That none out of her Communion can be ſaved*, ſhould after all this, in pure *Condeſcenſion* to Men declared *Hereticks*, diveſt her ſelf of her *Authority*, lay aſide her *Infallible Definitions*, come down from the *Tribunal* and the *Throne* of *Judicature* and *Majeſty*, and ſtand at the *Bar* ſubmitting *her ſelf* and the whole *Cauſe* to an indifferent and equal *Trial*, is a thing as little to be hoped for, as it is yet unagreed upon by what *Law*, *Jury* or *Judg* the *Controverſy* ſhould be decided. And truly on the other ſide, it ſeems to me altogether as unreaſonable in her to accept, That *we Proteſtants of the Church* of *England*, tho we pretend to nothing of this *Exorbitant Power* over *Her* or other *Churches*, or of determining *Diſputes* for all the World, ſhould yet, upon a naked *Summons* from *Her*, whoſe *Authority* we queſtion, and ſee no reaſon to acknowledg, forthwith *ſubſcribe* to the *Sentence* of our own *Condemnation*, without any fair and legal *Proceſs*, or indeed ſo much as yield to a *Trial*, where our profeſſed *Adverſaries* muſt be at once the *Law-makers*, *Accuſers*, *Witneſſes*; and yet this is moſt notoriouſly our *Caſe*.

What courſe now in this *Caſe* can be taken by us? The *Church* of *Rome* tells us expreſly and peremptorily, *We cannot be ſaved out of her Communion*. Muſt we believe her without any more ado? That's indeed the way to make a ſhort end of all our *Differences*, for then we muſt yield to be

Her's,

Her's, or else run headlong to *Damnation*: But if we believe her not (as for my part I know not how we can do, till we see some *reason* why we should do so) the *Dispute* (for ought I can see) is like to be *endless*. For no such *reasons* can, or ought she to give us, if she will be constant to *her self*, and stand to her own *Principles*, (as will plainly appear anon) and if she desert her own *Principles*, she must yield her self to be *fallible*, and not the *true Church*; and then in vain is all talk of *Reasons*, why they that are not of her *Communion* should be *damned*.

However, suppose it be pretended (as indeed it is) that we have had sufficient *Reasons* given us, why we ought to believe her in this Point. This then is the present *Question* between us, Whether she hath given us *sufficient reason* for this, or no. *She* confidently *affirms* it, *We* as confidently *deny* it. *She* calls us *obstinate Hereticks* for denying it, and lays many a heavy *Curse* upon us: We for this think her a very *unreasonable* and *imperious Mistress*, usurping an *Authority* over us, which *God* never gave her. Who I wonder shall now be thought fit to decide this *Dispute*? *She* will be *tried* and *judg'd* by no other but *her self*; for *She* is resolv'd to be *Sole* and *Infallible Judg* in all *Controversies* of *Religion*: That is in plain terms, She will *accuse* us, and she will leave us no room for our own *Defence*; She will *condemn* us, and she will not permit us to question the *Justice* of her *Sentence*. She tells us, we are bound to *believe* her, and *obey* her, or else we must die eternally for it. We desire some *reason* may be brought to *convince* us of this Duty: and she tells us again, she is our *Supreme* and *Infallible Mistress*, and *Mother*, and *Judg*; and so the *Conclusion* is, We must believe she hath this *Supreme Authority* and *Infallibility*, because she is *Supreme* and *Infallible*; which we can yet see no reason to believe, and therefore cannot believe; and because we cannot believe it, we are declared to be *Hereticks*, and in a State of *Damnation*.

Seeing

Seeing then, that the *Church* of *Rome* will by no means recede from her *Claim* to this *Supremacy* and *Infallibility*; it seems plain to me, that there is no possibility of satisfying *her* any way whatsoever but by *yielding* my self up intirely to her without any farther *dispute*. But because I cannot do this, without violence to my *Conscience*, and incurring that very *Damnation*, which she would persuade me thereby to prevent; I must of necessity leave her a while to satisfy her self about the *Truth* and *Charity* of this *Doctrine* as she can; whilst I for my own private *Satisfaction* take into a very serious *Consideration* these *two* things.

I. Whether I can discern any solid ground to hope, that I may be *saved*, as I am now a *Protestant* of the *Church* of *England*.

II. What more hopeful way to *Salvation* the *Church* of *Rome* can me put into, should I enter into her *Communion*.

If the result of this double *Enquiry* shall be, that I really think my self in a fair way to *Salvation* where I am already, and cannot discern any more hopeful way to it in the *Church* of *Rome*; I must needs accout my self bound in *Conscience*, and under the Penalty of *Damnation*, to steer my *course* according to the best *Light* I shall be able, by such a diligent and impartial *Inquiry*, to attain unto, and content my self with that *Religion*, which seems *best* and *safest* to me, till some *better* and *safer* can be found.

SECT. I.

The *first* thing I am to inquire into, is, *What good ground of hope I can discern that I may be* saved *as I am a* Protestant. And here the *first* thing I am to consider is, what I mean by the Name of *Protestant*, as it is own'd by the Members of the *Church* of *England*, and as I can heartily answer to it.

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By a *Proteſtant* I underſtand no other but a *Chriſtian*, adhering firmly both in *Faith* and *Practice* to the *written Word* of *God*, and *proteſting* againſt both the *Faith* and *Practice* of the *Papiſts*, and all others whatſoever, ſo far only, as they are either *repugnant* to the *Holy Scripture* in any thing, or *ungrounded* on the ſame in things pretended by them *neceſſary* to *Salvation*. Such *Proteſtants* do we of the *Church* of *England* profeſs our ſelves to be, as is apparent unto all, from the *6th* of our XXXIX *Articles*, affirming, *That the* Scriptures *contain all things neceſſary to* Salvation; *ſo that whatſoever is not* read *therein, nor may be* proved *thereby, is not to be required of any Man, that it ſhould be believed as an* Article *of* Faith, *or be thought requiſite or neceſſary to* Salvation.

This is our very *firſt Principle*, as we are called *Proteſtants*, and ſuch an one I do heartily profeſs my ſelf; neither ſee I yet the leaſt cauſe to doubt of my *Salvation*, whilſt by the *Grace* of *God* I live anſwerably to this *Profeſſion*. For that the *Proteſtant Religion* built upon this *Principle* is a *ſafe Religion*, is I think altogether as plain, as that *Chriſtianity* it ſelf, *pure* and *unmix'd*, is the *Way* to *Salvation*; becauſe 'tis plain, that this *Religion* we profeſs, holding to this *Principle*, can be nothing elſe but *pure* and *unmix'd Chriſtianity*, being that, and no other, which is contained in the Holy *Scripture*.

Is then the holy *Scripture* the *Word of God* or not? Was it given unto us of God to be the Rule of our *Religion*, that is, of our *Faith*, *Worſhip*, and *holy Converſation*, or was it not? If * *Bellarmine* may be credited, this is the *Declaration* of the *Catholick* Church, both in the third Council of *Carthage*, and alſo in that of *Trent*. *The Books of the* Prophets *and* Apoſtles *are the true* Word *of* God, *and the* ſure *and* ſtable *Rule of Life*. And as he ſhortly after adds, *The moſt* ſure *and* ſafeſt *Rule*. Now, whether it be the *compleat*, *perfect* and *adequate Rule*, as we conſtantly affirm; or only a *partial Rule*, or but ſome *part* of it, as the *Papiſts* contend; *it ſelf*, when

* De verb. Dei. l. 1. c. 1.

when diligently consulted, will be best able to inform us. For it is on all hands granted to be the *Word* of *God*, which cannot *lie*; and therefore unquestionably *true* in all things whatsoever it teacheth us; and of those many excellent things which it very plainly teacheth, its one *Perfection* and *Sufficiency* is one, and for my present *Satisfaction* very *considerable*.

I find in the *first* place, that *God himself* writ the *Ten Commandments*, the compleat *Rule* of *Piety* and *Justice*, with *his own Finger*, Exod. 31. 1, 18. Deut. 9. 10. & 10. 2, 4. That he *commanded* them to be *written on the Posts and Gates*, Deut. 6. 9. & 11. 20. *That* Moses *wrote all the Words of the Lord*, Exod. 24. 4. and deliver'd the *Writing* to the *Priests* to be *read* unto the People, *Deut.* 31. 9. And that the *King* was to have by him a *Copy* of it for his Direction, *Deut.* 17. 18. I find many *Curses* denounced against the Breakers of it, *Deut.* 28. 58. and *Blessings* promised to them that keep it, *Deut.* 30. 10. I find it was expresly forbidden to *add unto it*, or *to diminish from it*, Deut. 4. 2, 12, 32. *To turn from it to the right-hand or to the left*, Josh. 1. 7. And that the good *Kings* were careful to order all things according to it, and to *reform* what had been amiss by it, 1 *Chron.* 16. 40. 2 *Kings* 22. 13. And therefore I do not wonder to hear the *Psalmist*, saying, *The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the Soul*, Psal. 19. 7. nor to find *Isaiah* sending Men *to the Law, and to the Testimony*, saying, *If any speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no Light in them*, Isa. 8. 20.

Again, I find our *Blessed Saviour himself*, and his *Apostles* after him, very frequently *appealing* and *referring* their Hearers to that which had been *written* in the *Books* of *Moses*, in the *Psalms*, and in the *Prophets*. *They have* Moses *and the Prophets, let them hear them*, saith *Abraham* in the *Parable*, Luk. 16. 29. *Search the Scriptures* (saith *Christ*, Joh. 5. 39.) *for in them ye think ye have Eternal Life, and they are they which testify of me.* I find that St. *Luke*, writing his *Gospel*, gives his *Theophilus* this good reason for it; *That thou mightst know*

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the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed, Luk. 1. 4. *The things which are most surely believed among us*, v. 1. *all things of which himself had perfect understanding from the very first*, v. 3. I find St. *John*, who wrote last of all the *Apostles*, affirming, that tho *Jesus* did *many other Signs, which are not written in that Book* of his, yet *these are written, that we may believe that* Jesus *is the* Christ *the Son of God, and that believing we might have Life through his Name*, Joh. 20. 30, 31. And finally I find St. *Paul* asserting the *Perfection* of the Holy *Scripture* as *fully* and *plainly* as any Man can speak, 2 *Tim.* 3. 15, 16, 17. saying, That *the Holy Scripture is able to make a Man wise unto Salvation through Faith which is in Christ Jesus*. That *all Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness, that the Man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good Works*. Now what more can we desire, than *to be made wise unto Salvation*? And we are here plainly told, that *the holy Scripture is able* to make us so. What more can be needful to direct us in the Way to *Salvation*, than what we may learn from the *Scripture*? It is *profitable* for our *Information* and *Establishment* in the *Truth*, for the *Confutation* of *Error* and *Heresy*, for the *Correction* of *Vice* and *Wickedness*, for our *Instruction* in *Righteousness*. It is so *profitable* for all these purposes, that thereby *the Man of God*, the *Pastor* and *Teacher* may be made *compleat*, and well *furnish'd* for all the branches of his *Office*, all the *works* of his *holy Calling*. In short, it is *able* to bring us to *Faith* in *Christ Jesus*; And *whosoever believeth in him, shall not perish, but have everlasting Life*; Joh. 3. 16.

Furthermore; from the same *Scripture* I also learn, that *Unwritten* or *Oral Tradition* hath ever been found too *deceitful* a thing to be *relied* on for so great a matter as *Salvation*. I find that before the *Flood*, notwithstanding the *long Lives* of Men, the *few Principles* of *Natural Religion*, and the *readiness* of *learning* and *remembring* things so agreeable to *humane*

Nature, yet *all Flesh* had soon *corrupted his Way upon the Earth*, Gen. 6. 12. and *every Imagination of the Thoughts of Man's Heart was only evil continually*, v. 5. And after the *Flood*, the whole World was quickly over-run with *Idolatry*: So ill was the *Doctrine* which had been preach'd by *Noah* and his *Sons*, preserved by *Oral Tradition*. Nay, I find, that after *God* was pleas'd to give the *Jews* his *Will* in *Writing*, their *Teachers* had so corrupted the *Doctrine* of *God* with their *Traditions*, that it was a great part of our *blessed Saviour's* business, to rescue it from those *Traditional* Corruptions. He reproves the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* for *transgressing the Commandments of God by their Traditions*, Mat. 15. 3. shewing them how they had *made it of none effect by the same*, v. 6. And that *in vain they worshipp'd God, teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of Men*, v. 9. And St. *Paul* warns the *Colossians* to *beware of being deceived through Philosophy and vain Deceit, after the Tradition of Men, after the Rudiments of the World, and not after Christ*, Col. 2. 6. And the special *occasion* of *writing* most of the *Epistles*, yea and the *Gospels* too, seems to be the *Danger* that Christians were in of being *seduced* by *false Teachers*, from the *Doctrine* of *Christ* and his *Apostles*, under the pretence of *Tradition*. Such were the *Wolves in Sheeps cloathing*, Mat. 7. 15 *False Apostles, deceitful Workers, transforming themselves into the Apostles of Christ*, 2 Cor. 11. 13. Pretending to *another Gospel*, Gal. 3. 6. Men of *Sleight* and *cunning Craftiness, lying in wait to deceive*, Eph. 4. 14.

From what I find in the *Scripture*, I must needs conclude, till I be better inform'd, that it is a *sufficient Rule* for us to go by; and that, so long as we hold us to *it alone*, in our *Faith* and *Practice*, there can be no necessity of resorting to the *Church* of *Rome, for that unto which* our *Bibles* at home can direct us. The *Scripture* is the *Word of God*, and *sure Rule* of *Faith*, saith the *Infallible Church* of *Rome*, if *Bellarmine* may be believ'd: This *holy Scripture is able to make*

as wise unto Salvation, saith the *this Infallible Scripture*; and we take no other but this *Holy* and *Infallible Scripture* for the *Rule* of our *Faith* and *Religious Practice*, say we *Protestants*. What now should hinder me to infer from hence, that if the *Scripture* be the *Word of God*, we *Protestants* are very well as we are; for we have the *Word* of the *Infallible God*, and if it may stand us in any stead, the *Word* of the *Infallible Church* (as she will needs be accounted) to assure us, that adhering to the holy *Scripture*, we are in the *ready* and *sure way* to *Salvation*.

Farther yet, as I am a *Protestant* of the Church of *England*, I do declare in the words of our VIIIth Article, *That the three Creeds*, Nice *Creed*, Athanasius *Creed*, *and that which is commonly called the Apostles Creed, ought throughly to be received and believ'd; for they may be proved by most certain Warrants of Holy Scripture.* Seeing then, we receive and throughly believe the same *Creeds*, and no other, which the *Church* of *Rome* her self professeth to believe; and which were thought by the *Catholick Church* of *Christ*, for above 400 Years after the first planting of *Christianity*, to contain all *Points* of *Faith* necessary for the *Salvation* of *Christians*; I think I have hence gather'd this farther Confirmation of my *Assurance*, that we *Protestants* are in the direct *Way* to *Salvation*; that we are of the very same *Religion*, and no other, in all the *necessary* Points of *Christian Faith*, whereof the *Catholick Church* evidently was in the *first* and *purest* Ages of it. In the *four first General Councils* no other *Articles* of *Faith* were held needful to be believed by Christians, but those of these *Creeds*, which we entirely own and believe. Either then it is true, That these *three Creeds* contain all *necessary* Points of *Christian Faith*, or it is not. If it be *true*, we are *safe* enough, and can with no colour of *Reason* be said to *err* in *Faith*, or to deserve the Name of *Hereticks*. If it be not *true*, then were all those *Primitive Christians* as much *Hereticks* as *we* are, and knew no more, than we do, what belong'd to the *Salvation* of Christians.

Christians. And strangely *partial* is the *Church of Rome* in approving the *Faith* of those *Councils*, which one of their most famous *Popes* and *Saints* is said to have reverenced as the *four Gospels*, and yet to condemn ours, tho in all Points the very same. Especially when the *Third* of those *Councils*, held at *Ephesus* in the Time of Pope *Celestine*, did expressly decree, *That it should not be lawful to utter, write, or compose any other Faith, besides that which had been defined by the Holy Fathers congregated in the Holy Ghost in the City of* Nice. Ordering, that all they should be *punish'd, who tender'd any other to such as had a desire to be converted to the Knowledg of the Truth, whether they were* Gentiles, Jews, *or of any other* Heresy. Whereby 'tis plain, that the *Fathers* in this *third Council* did conclude that *Creed* to comprehend the *entire Faith* of a *Christian*. And indeed a Man would think that the *Council* of *Trent* had in the Beginning of it been altogether of the same mind, when of the same *Creed* it thus declared it self; *That it is that Principle wherein all that profess the Faith of Christ do necessarily agree, and the Firm and Onely Foundation against which the Gates of Hell shall not prevail.*

I may, I think, upon these *Considerations*, without more ado, be very well satisfied of the *Safety* of the *Protestant Religion*. The *Papists* themselves must grant, That whatsoever we *believe* or *practise*, as of necessity to *Salvation*, really is so; and therefore, that we do not *err* either in our *Faith* or *Practice*, whilst we live according to our own *Principles*. For if we *err* in *either*, so far do *they err* also; and not *they* only, but *all* the *Christian World*. And here we may press them with their own *way* of *Arguing*, and to much more purpose, than they are wont to use it against us. When they would convince us that their *Religion* is the *safer*, they are wont thus to argue; *That Religion is the* safer, *wherein, by the Confession of both Sides, a Man may be saved: but both Sides confess, that a Man may be saved in the Popish Religion, and both Sides do not confess that a Man may be saved in the Protestant*

Proteſtant Religion: therefore the Popiſh Religion is the ſafer. Suppoſing now this way of arguing for the *Safety* of their *Religion* from the *Confeſſion* of *both Parties* be of any ſtrength, as they muſt ſuppoſe it to be, who ſo often and confidently uſe it; then muſt the like *Argument* from the ſame *Medium*, be altogether as ſtrong for us. I would only beg of them to grant me *this*, (and I hope they will not ſay my Requeſt is unreaſonable) That *that Religion is the ſafeſt, all the Doctrines whereof are the trueſt.* If they will not grant me this, they muſt grant it *ſafer* to hold *ſome falſe Doctrines* than *all true.* But if they think this abſurd, then muſt they give me leave thus to argue; *That Religion is the ſafeſt, wherein all Doctrines held or taught, as neceſſary to Salvation, are, by the Confeſſion of both Sides, certainly true. Now both Sides confeſs, that all Doctrines, held or taught in the Proteſtant Religion, are certainly true; and both Sides do not confeſs, that all Doctrines held and taught in the Popiſh Religion are certainly true: therefore the Proteſtant Religion is the ſafer.* The ſame *Articles* of *Faith*, the ſame *Rules* and *Precepts* of *Life*, the ſame *Acts* of *religious Worſhip*, the ſame *holy Sacraments*, the ſame *holy Orders* of *Miniſters*, which *we* have; the very ſame have *they* alſo. But *they* have many things of all theſe ſorts, which *we* have not; no nor any other *Chriſtians*, but thoſe of their own *Communion.* And therefore to ſtrengthen my *Argument*, yet more I ſay, *If that* Doctrine *and* Practice *be the* ſafeſt, *wherein all good* Chriſtians *agree*; *we are ſure that ours is the* ſafeſt, *becauſe all good* Chriſtians *do agree in them*; *and that theirs is not ſafe, becauſe all good* Chriſtians *do not agree in them.* Nay let me add this more: Our *Religion* is either *ſafe* and *true*, in all things pretended by us *neceſſary* to *Salvation*; or there is no ſuch thing as a *ſafe* and *true Chriſtian Religion* in the World *viſibly profeſſed*; and if ſo, it will follow, that *Chriſt* hath no true *viſible Church* upon Earth, which I am confident no *Papiſt* will ſay. The Conſequence is plain, becauſe all *Chriſtians* all the World over,

over, that make any *Figure* of a *Church*, hold the ſame both *Faith* and *Practice* with us, in what we account *neceſſary* to *Salvation*, the *Church* of *Rome* it ſelf not excluded.

Tho it be very certain, that we *poſitively* and *affirmatively* hold nothing in *Faith* or *Practice*, as neceſſary to *Salvation*, but what is held by the *Church of Rome* her ſelf, and all other *Chriſtian Churches*; yet will not the Men of that *Church* allow us any *poſſibility* of being *ſaved*, whilſt we are *Proteſtants*. And he, who of late hath been at ſome Pains to *repreſent* the *Papiſt* to us in his *faireſt Dreſs*, hath labour'd as hard in this *Point*, as in any other, to ſhew that his *Church* is not *uncharitable* in the *Doctrine* She delivers concerning our *deſperate Eſtate*. Now although I am not enquiring, whether *this Doctrine* be *charitable* or *uncharitable*, but only whether it be *true* or *falſe*; yet, for my better Satisfaction, I will examine all that he ſaith to this purpoſe.

He tells us, His *Church doth nothing herein but what ſhe hath learn'd of* Chriſt *and his* Apoſtles. And if he can ſhew me this, I muſt needs be fully ſatisfied, being verily perſwaded they never taught any thing *uncharitable* or *untrue*. To ſhew this, he tells us, how Chriſt, *Mark.* 16. 16. hath ſaid, *He that believeth and is baptiſed, ſhall be ſaved; but he that believeth not, ſhall be damned. And this is all his Church delivers in this Point.* If this be *all* She delivers, we cannot call her *uncharitable* for it, for we our ſelves willingly ſubſcribe to this Sentence of our *Bleſſed Saviour*. Only we think, he did not here *teach* and *authoriſe* the Church of *Rome* to ſay, That all who are not of her *Faith* and *Communion*, ſhall be *damn'd*; tho ſhe knows they believe all that *Chriſt* ſent his *Apoſtles* to teach them. I do not find in the *Roman Ritual*, that the Church of *Rome* in the *Baptiſing* either of *Infants* or *adult* Perſons, uſes or requires any other *Confeſſion* of *Faith*, but that only of the *Apoſtles Creed*, which is the ſame we uſe; and if to *beleive* and be *baptiſed* in this *Faith*, be enough for the *Salvation* of *Papiſts*, why is it not enough

also for *Protestants?* And if the *Additional Articles* of the *Trentine Faith*, and P. *Pius* his *Creed* be *necessary* to *Salvation*, why is there no mention made of them in the *Roman* Order of *Baptism?*

He adds that of St. *Paul*, (1 *Tim.* 4. 1, 2, 3.) where *foretelling of some who in later times would come and preach a Doctrine, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from Meats, which God hath created to be received; he brands them with the infamous Title, of Men that depart from the Faith; giving heed to seducing Spirits, and Doctrines of Devils.* And several other Places of *Scripture* he then produceth, to shew that *Hereticks*, such as they *that affirmed the* Resurrection *to be past already, or denied that* Jesus *is the* Christ, *&c.* are in a State of *Condemnation*. Other Texts of *Scripture* he brings, wherein *Christians* are charged to be *unanimous*, and condemned for causing *Strife* and *Divisions*, warn'd to maintain *Unity*, and not to hearken to *false Teachers* and *Seducers*, *&c.* But I find not by all this, that St. *Paul* or any of the *Apostles*, taught the *Church* of *Rome*, which both *forbids to marry*, and commands to *abstain from Meats allow'd of God*; which teacheth divers *Doctrines*, whereof we find not any thing in the *Scripture*, to condemn those for *Hereticks*, that adhere wholly to the *Doctrine* of the *Scripture*; or for *Schismaticks*, who hold *Communion* with all *Christians*, so far as they keep to the *Doctrine* of *Christ* and his *Apostles*; and *divide* from the *Church* of *Rome*, no farther, than in those Points only wherein they cannot hold her *Communion* and the *Doctrine* of *Christ* too. I do not see, but after the same rate, as he here defends the *Charity* of his *Church*, he might also defend her *Justice*, if She should pretend, that because *Christ* commanded his *Disciples* to fetch him another Man's *Ass* and her *Colt*; She did but what he taught, in taking away other Mens Goods, and giving no other reason for it but this, that she hath *need* of them.

What the *Papists* say more, to shew that we can have no *Saving Faith*, is one of these *two* things. Either, *first*, That it is not an *entire Faith*, there being (as they say) many *necessary Articles* which we believe not: Or, *Secondly*, That it is no *right-grounded Faith*, seeing it is not built upon sufficient *Authority*, that is to say, on the *Authority* of the *Catholick Church*.

Their *first Objection* to the *Protestant Faith* is this, That it is no *entire Faith*. And here I am told by the *Representer*, *There is no more hopes for one that denies obstinately any one Point of Catholick Faith, tho he believes all the rest; than there is for one that keeps Nine of the Commandments, with the Breach of the Tenth.* Now this seems to me no great Encouragement to change the *Communion* of the *Church* of *England* for that of *Rome*, if an *entire Faith* and an *entire Obedience* be but *equally necessary*. I wish with all my Heart I could be as sure, that the *Church* of *Rome* doth not break the *first Commandment*, by her *Invocation of Saints*, and *Adoration* of the *Host*; and the *second Commandment*, in her *Adoration* of *Images* and the *Cross*; as I am sure, that the *Church* of *England* neither *obstinately denies* any *Article* of the *Catholick Faith*; nor *countenanceth* the Breach of any *one* of the *ten Commandments*, as that Church seems too much to do, whilst she takes no little Care, that the *People* may not know them *all*.

We stedfastly believe the whole *Scripture*, so far as we are able to understand it *explicitly*; and when we do not *implicitly*, we receive the *three Creeds*, which have ever been thought to contain the *entire Faith* of a Christian: wherein then is our *Faith partial* or *defective*? I must consider that anon: at present, seeing *Obstinacy*, according to our *Adversaries*, is a necessary ingredient of an *Heretick*; I can easily assure *my self*, tho I do not see how 'tis possible for me to satisfy *them*, that I am no *Heretick*; for I certainly know, that I am very desirous to be throughly inform'd, and to be brought to a right understanding of all necessary *Truths*; and am still

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in a readineſs, and full preparation of Mind, to believe any *one* or *all* of their *Articles*, whenſoever they ſhall pleaſe to prove the *Truth* of them, either by *Scripture*, or by unqueſtionable *Apoſtolical Tradition*. I am ſure therefore, I deny not *obſtinately* any one Point of *Catholick Faith*. But till they vouchſafe me the proof I deſire, I muſt content my ſelf with the *Scripture*, which is *able to make wiſe unto Salvation through Faith which is in Chriſt Jeſus*, and not in the *Pope* of *Rome*, nor in the *Roman Church*.

And yet I find, that it is for *this* eſpecially, that we are call'd *Hereticks*, that we *adhere only* to the *Scripture*; and that they often explain their meaning, in beſtowing that *Title* on us, by calling us *Scripturiſts* and *Goſpellers*; and ridicule us for talking of *only Scripture*. But when I conſider, that this is the *Fundamental Hereſy* wherewith we are charged, I cannot but a little wonder at it; and find leſs cauſe than ever, to think we can be *Hereticks* indeed, or that they can call us ſo any otherwiſe than in jeſt. Can they grant the *Scripture* to be the *Word* of *God*, and the *Goſpel* to be *the Power of* God *unto Salvation*; and yet in *earneſt* call us *Hereticks* for being *Scripturiſts* and *Goſpellers*? If, ſubmitting our *Faith* in all things to the *Scripture*, we can be *Hereticks*; then muſt the *Scripture* teach *Hereſy*, and cannot be the *Word* of *God*. What a *Contradiction* is this in *Papiſts*, to call us *Scripturiſts* and *Hereticks*; which is in effect to ſay, That we adhere only to the *Infallible Truth* of *God*, and yet are guilty of *obſtinate Error* in the *Faith*?

What is it then wherein our Faith is defective? It is in this, that we do not believe *all* that the *Church* of *Rome* propounds to be believed. This indeed would make us *Papiſts*, but whether it would make us better *Chriſtians* than we are already, is not ſo certain. *A* Papiſt (ſaith the *Repreſenter*) *is one that lives and believes what is preſcribed in the Council of* Trent. But this *Rule* of the *Papiſts Faith* came into the World (as we think) too late, almoſt by *fifteen hundred*

Years, to be the *Rule* of the *Christian Faith*; and therefore he could not have *represented* his *Religion* to us with greater disadvantage than here he doth. We cannot conceive how so small a handful of *Prelats*, most of them *Italians*, sworn *Vassals* to the *Bishop* of *Rome*, assembled together at *Trent fifteen hundred* Years after *Christ*'s preaching, and wholly *limited* and *directed* in all their proceedings by the *Will* and *Command* of *Him*, whose *Authority* was the *principal* thing in *question*, and submitting all at last to *Him alone*, should come by that immense *Authority*, to command the *Faith* of the *Christian World*, or what *Commission* they could shew from *Christ*, the *Supream Lawgiver*, to prescribe *Laws* of *Faith* and *Life* to all *Christendom*. And we can as little conceive, how this pretended *Council*, could at once *confirm* all the *General Councils*, and among the rest, that of *Ephesus* before mention'd; yea, and declare the *Nicene Creed* to be the *firm and only Foundation*, and yet contrary to the *Decree* of that *Ephesine Council*, and not very consistently to it's own *Declaration*, decree so many more *Points*, than that *Creed* contains, as *necessary* to be believed. Moreover, if this be the great *Oracle* we must consult, as our surest *Guide* to Heaven; where must we meet with him, that can give us the certain *Sense* of its *General* and *Ambiguous Responses*? The learnedst of the *Romish Church* are not yet well agreed about it; and if the *English Representer*, or *French Expounder* have had the luck to hit it, I am sure, that many heretofore, who thought themselves as *wise* as *either* of them, have strangely miss'd it: Or else that *Council*, and the *Religion* call'd *Popery*, hath several *Faces* for several *Times* and *Countries*, and in one *place* and *time*, shall look like *it self*, and in another shall be made to look as like the *Protestant Religion*, as the *Artificial Painter* dares make it. But that which here put us to a stand in this, That as the *Pope* at first taught that *Council* to speak; so hath he reserved the *Interpretation* of its *Decrees* to the *See Apostolick*, or himself only; and *He* is not always

pleas'd

pleas'd in plain terms to let us know his Mind; and if he ſhould, for once, ſpeak out plainly, it will be a little hard for him to aſſure us, that none of his *Succeſſors* ſhall hereafter *contradict* him; unleſs he can ſatisfy us, that he has as well the Gift of *Propheſying*, as that of *defining* and *interpreting*.

However, it is for *not believing* the *new Articles* of *Trent*, that we are accounted *Hereticks*, and out of the *way* to *Heaven*. And the *reaſon* is, becauſe theſe *Articles* are ſuppoſed to be as firmly grounded on the *Word* of *God*, as any of thoſe *old ones* which we believe: For the *Word* of *God* (ſaith the *Council* of *Trent*) is *partly* contain'd in the *Books* of *Scripture*, and *partly* in *Traditions unwritten*; *theſe are to be received with the ſame affection of Piety and Reverence*; and therefore he that disbelieves any *Article* grounded upon *unwritten Tradition*, is no leſs a *Heretick*, than he that disbelieves what is *written* in the Books of *Scripture*. If I knew how to be ſatisfied concerning the *Authority* of this *Council*, I could eaſily tell what *Credit* I ſhould give to this, which it ſo confidently affirms. But ſo long as I cannot diſcern the *reaſon* of it's pretended *Authority*, I am a little apt to ſuſpect, that it was not the *clearneſs* of this *Principle* that moved it to make ſo many either *unſcriptural* or *antiſcriptural Decrees*; but rather the deſire it had of vindicating its *unſcriptural Doctrines* and *Practices*, that made it neceſſary to eſpouſe ſuch a *Principle*. And indeed when I well conſider it, I am not a little comforted by it; that this *equalling unwritten Tradition* with *Scripture*, which is the very *Baſis* of the *Romiſh Religion*, is one of the moſt *incredible* things in the World of *it ſelf*, and as *deſtitute* of any tolerable *Evidence*, whence it may gain any *Credit* to it ſelf. It muſt needs ſeem very ſtrange to any conſidering Man, That the *wiſe God* ſhould leave us a *Rule* in *writing*, on purpoſe to direct us how to *honour Him*, and attain to *Salvation*; and give it this *Commendation*, that *it is able to make wiſe unto Salvation*; and yet omit a great many things altogether as *neceſſary* to thoſe

those ends, as those that are *written*; and without the Belief and Practice whereof, those that are *written* can no whit avail us; and yet never so much as once tell us in all that *Writing*, whither we should go to seek and learn them: Nay, that he should omit therein the *principal Point* of all, and without which all that is either *written* or *unwritten* can signify nothing, that is, to tell us, That the *Roman Church* is the *only true Church*, the *only sure* and *Infallible Interpreter* of all that is *written*; and the *only faithful Keeper* of all that is *unwritten*; from the *Mouth* whereof we must receive all *saving Truth*. This I think is a thing that must needs be very hard for any one to believe, that believes the *Infinite Wisdom*, *Goodness* and *Veracity* of *God*. And how it can ever be made *evident*, that there are such *necessary unwritten Traditions*, or that *these*, which the *Church* of *Rome* holds, are *they*; I think no Man living can imagine. I am sure if the *Papists* way of reasoning be good, it's *safer* not to believe this. For all Sides consent, that the *Scripture* which we have is the certain *Word* of *God*; but all Sides are not agreed, that *unwritten Traditions* are the *Word* of *God*; therefore it is *safer* to believe the *Scripture* only to be the *Word* of *God*, and not *Traditions*. We hold us to *Scripture*, and the *Papists* grant that to be the *safest Rule*; their greatest strength lies in *unwritten*, or (as they are wont to speak) *Oral* and *Practical Traditions*; which in plain *English*, is no more but *Report* and *Custom*; and whether there can reasonably be thought any *certainty* in these, equal to *that* of the *written Word* of *God* given by *Divine Inspiration*, can be no hard matter for a very weak Understanding to determine.

That which makes these *unwritten Traditions* of the less Credit with me, is the assurance I have, that a *pretence* to them, and a vain *confidence* in them, hath produced much *Error* and *Division* in the *Church*. 'Tis well known, how *far*, and how *long* the *Errors* of the *Millenaries*, and of administring the *Eucharist* to *Infants* (to mention no more) prevail'd

vail'd on this account. And the early *Schisms* betwixt the *Roman* and *Asian Churches*, about the keeping of *Easter*; and the hot Contests between the *Roman* and *African Churches* about *rebaptizing Hereticks*, were occasion'd, and upheld by *Pretences* on all hands to *Tradition*. This was the only *Refuge* of old for *Hereticks*, when they were confounded by the *Scripture*, to take shelter under *Tradition*: whence *Tertullian* call'd them *Lucifugas Scripturarum, Men who shunn'd the Light of the Scriptures*. Again, saith he, *They confess indeed that the* Apostles *were ignorant of nothing, and differed not among themselves in their preaching; but they will not have it, that they revealed all things to all; for some things they deliver'd openly to all, some things secretly and to a few; and that because St.* Paul *useth this saying to* Timothy, *O* Timothy, *keep that which is committed to thy trust. And again, that good thing which is committed to thee, keep. Irenaus* also makes mention of *Hereticks* who affirm'd, *That out of the Scriptures the Truth could not be found out by them who understood not Tradition, because it was not deliver'd by Writing, but by living Voice; for which cause also St.* Paul *said, we speak Wisdom among them that are perfect.* St. *Augustine* in his 97th *Tract* upon *John*, saith, *that all the most foolish Hereticks, who desire to be accounted Christians, used to colour their audacious Fictions with a pretence from that Sentence of the Gospel*, Joh. 16. 10. *I have many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now.* Thus did the *Hereticks* of old both plead *Tradition*, and sought to strengthen their Plea by such places of *Scripture* as these; which are the very same, that the *Papists* produce to the same purpose, as may be seen in *Bellarmine*, and others.

Tertul. de Præscr. c. 25.

Iren. cont. Hær. l. 3. c. 2.

But I find that the *Orthodox Fathers* of the *Church* were of another Mind. *The things which we find not in the Scriptures* (saith St. *Ambrose*) *how can we use them?* Ambr. Offic. l. 1. c. 23. *Let those of* Hermogenes *his Shop* (saith *Tertullian*) *shew that it is written. If it be not written, let them fear that Woe design'd for those that add or take away. Irenaus* saith,

Tert. adv. Hermog. c. 22.

Iren. l. 3. c. 1. saith, *that what the Apostles had preach'd, the same afterwards by the Will of God they deliver'd unto us in the Scriptures, to be the foundation and pillar of our Faith.* St. *Hierome* against *Helvidius*, calls *the Holy Scriptures the only Fountain of Truth.* Aug. l. 2. cont. Donat. *Let us bring* (saith St. *Austin*) *for trial, not the deceitful Ballances, where we may hang on what we will, and how we will, at our own pleasure; saying, this is heavy, and this is light; but let us bring the Divine Ballance of the Holy Scriptures, and in that let us weigh what is heavier; nay, let us not weigh, but let us own the things already weighed by the Lord.* And elsewhere, *The Holy Scripture* (saith he) *fixeth the Rule of our Doctrine.* And indeed the excellent sayings of the *Antients* to this purpose are so well known, that I should be very vain to cite any more here.

If now, after all this, I should suppose, what I can by no means yet grant, that God having order'd the *Scriptures* to be *written*, and said so much in the *Commendation* thereof; they do not yet contain all things necessary to *Salvation*, but that some part of those *necessary* things (as both some *Heretick*s of old, and *Papists* now would have it believed) was only *whisper'd* privately into the *Ears* of the *Apostles*, as *Mysteries* unfit at that time to be communicated to *vulgar Christians*; and that the *Apostles* (tho they were commanded by *Christ* to *preach upon the House-tops that which he had told them privately in the Ear*, Mat. 10. 27.) did not yet think themselves obliged to obey this Command in *writing* all that was *necessary*; but rather to conceal for a time, a considerable part of that *mysterious* Doctrine. Yea, suppose that this was one principal use of St. *Peter*'s *Keys*, to lock up all these *Mysteries* in the *Cabinet* of the Churches *Breast* (let the Church signify what it can) to be communicated to the World, in after-Ages by piece-meal, so as she should find Men prepar'd by a blind *credulity* to receive them. Yet after all, I must needs think, that we are too hardly dealt with to be called *Hereticks* for not believing these things, till something be produced, whereby we may be assur'd, either that these things which

they

they commend to us come indeed from *Christ* & his *Apoſtles*, or that we are obliged to take the Church of *Rome*'s word for a good *Aſſurance*. It ſeems to me a very unreaſonable thing, that we ſhould be condemn'd as *obſtinate*, for not believing things never ſufficiently *proved*, whilſt we know and declare our ſelves prepared in Mind to yield upon the firſt rational *Conviction*. Why ſhould not that *Church* have the *charity* to forbear her *Cenſures*, till ſhe have tried the ſtrength of her *Arguments*? Why was the Council of *Trent*, contrary to the Cuſtom of other Councils, ſo liberal of her *Curſes*, and ſo ſparing of her *Reaſons*? One good *Reaſon* would do more to make us of her Communion than a thouſand *Anathema's*. Would not a Man ſuſpect that they have no good *Reaſons* to ſhew, who keep them ſo *cloſe*? The plain *Truth* is, there have been ſuch vain *Pretences* to *Tradition* in all Ages, one contradicting another, that it ſeems impoſſible in this Age to diſcern between *true* and *falſe*. Did not *Clemens Alexandrinus* call it an *Apoſtolical Tradition*, that Chriſt preach'd but one Year? And did not *Irenæus* pretend a Tradition, deſcending from St. *John*, that Chriſt was about *fifty* Years old when he was crucified? And do the *Papiſts* account either of theſe to be *true*? Many things might be named, which for ſome time have been received as *Apoſtolical Traditions*, which the Church of *Rome* will not now own to be ſo. And thoſe which ſhe owns, ſhe can no more prove to be ſo, than thoſe ſhe hath *rejected*. It were eaſy to ſhew this, even from abundance of their own *Writers*, who aſſert the *Perfection* of the *Scripture*, and complain of the *Miſchief* this pretence to *Tradition* hath done; and who confeſs, they cannot be proved to come from the *Apoſtles*. But I ſhall now content my ſelf with the ingenuous Confeſſion of the *Biſhops* aſſembled at *Bononia*, in their Counſel given to P. *Julius* the 3*d*. *We plainly confeſs* (ſay they) *among our ſelves, that we cannot prove that which we hold and teach concerning* Traditions, *but we have ſome conjectures only*. And again; *In*

truth whoſoever ſhall diligently conſider the Scripture, and then all the things that are uſually done in our Churches, *will find there is great difference betwixt them; and that this Doctrine of ours is very unlike, and in many things quite repugnant to it.* What ſaid *Eraſmus* long ſince on the 2d *Pſalm*: *They call the People off* (ſaith he) *from the* Scriptures *unto little humane* Traditions, *which they have honeſtly invented for their own Profit.* And *Peter Suter*, a bitter Adverſary of his, hath theſe words; *Since many things are delivered to be obſerved, which are not expreſly found in Holy* Scripture, *will not unlearned Perſons, taking notice of theſe things, eaſily murmur; complaining that ſo great Burdens ſhould be laid upon them, whereby the Liberty of the Goſpel is ſo greatly impaired? Will they not alſo eaſily be drawn away from the obſervance of Eccleſiaſtical Ordinances, when they ſhall find that they are not contained in the Law of Chriſt?* And muſt we be *Hereticks* for not believing theſe ſo *uncertain Traditions?* Muſt our *Faith* be accounted *defective* and not *entire*, meerly becauſe we do not believe what no Man can make us underſtand to co come from *God?* This ſeems very hard.

It is now time for me to conſider the *ſecond Objection* made againſt our *Faith*, which is, That it is not *rightly grounded*, it is not built on the *Authority* of the *Church*, that is, the Church of *Rome*. And indeed ſo much weight I find laid upon this *one Point*, that I have ſome reaſon to think, that they, who have been very forward at all times to give ſuch liberal allowances of *implicit Faith* to their Friends at home, would be contented with a very ſmall meaſure of *explicit Belief* in us, if we would once be taught to ground our *Faith* aright, on the *ſole Authority* of that Church. It ſeems to me, that for the talk about it, they are no ſuch rigid Exactors of an *entire explicit Faith* in order to *Salvation*, but that if we will explicitly *believe* this one *fundamental Point*, the *Supreme Authority* of the *Roman Church* over all *Chriſtians*, they will deal very favourably with us in moſt others; and

excuſe our *Ignorance* eaſilier, than they can perſwade us to be content to be *ignorant*. I think I have very good reaſon to believe this, becauſe I know they can have no reaſon to reject them that believe but this one Point; for when once this great *Gobbet* is ſwallow'd down, the Paſſage will be ſo well open'd, that all other Points of *Faith* either go down with it, or will ſlip after it without the leaſt *ſtraining* or *grutching*. The *Authority* of *God* himſelf, ſpeaking in *Scripture*, will be of no farther *conſideration* to us; for that we muſt ſuppoſe to be included in the *Authority* of our *Mother* the *Church*. And whatſoever we ſhall thence-forward perceive to be the *Will* of our *Mother*, we muſt without all ſcruple, conclude it to be alſo the Will of our *Father*. The *Repreſenter* hath lately told us, that tho the *Scripture* (which is the *Word* of our *Heavenly* Father) may be the *Law*; yet the *Mother*, the *Roman Church*, is the *Judg*. *Having learn'd from her the* ſenſe *of the* Scripture, *we are obliged to ſubmit to this, and never preſume on our own private Sentiments, however ſeemingly grounded on* Reaſon *and* Scripture, *to believe or preach any new Doctrine oppoſite to the Belief of the* Church. And there's reaſon for this, if it be true which he elſewhere tells us, *That a Man may very eaſily frame as many* Creeds *as he pleaſes, and make* Chriſt *and his* Apoſtles *ſpeak what ſhall be moſt agreeable to his humour, and ſuit beſt with his Intereſt, and find plain proofs for all* (he means in *Scripture*); *the truth whereof* (*as of all other Points of Doctrine*) *ſtands* (as he ſaith) *upon the ſame Foundation of the* Churches Tradition, *which if it fail in one, leaves no ſecurity in any*. This is indeed to advance the *Church* to the very top-branch of all *Authority*, and to make the *holy Scripture* as very a *Noſe* of *Wax*, and as *Leaden* a *Rule*, as any of that *Church* ever thought it: ſeeing a Man may form and work it into *Creeds* of all *faſhions*, and find *plain proofs* in it for any odd *Humour*, or carnal and Worldly *Intereſt*. This then (as far as I can learn by him) is the only way for me to be a thorow *Papiſt*, and a good *Catholick*, I muſt lay aſide my

Pap. Repr. p. 35.

Ibid. p. 37, 38.

Reaſon, and the *Scripture*, and heed no more what either of theſe tell me; only I muſt have my Ear open to the *Voice* of the *Church*, and be wholly at her *teaching* and *command*, and I ſhall be *ſafe* enough.

Upon the moſt ſerious conſideration of the *Character* which the *Papiſt* is pleas'd to give us of himſelf, I cannot find what it is, for which they of that *Church* are ſo ſeverely bent againſt us *Proteſtants*; ſave only, that we will not, like tame *Animals*, without any *underſtanding* of our own, learn to *come* and go at a *whiſtle*; or *trot* on the Road as we are driven, and *ſtoop* to take on our Backs whatever Load it ſhall pleaſe the *Roman Church* to lay upon us, confeſſing her to have *abſolute* and *uncontroulable Authority* over our *Faith*. *The ſtanding out againſt the Catholick Church makes Men* Hereticks, *and without erring againſt this, no Man is guilty of* Hereſy, ſaid the *Jeſuit Fiſher*, in his *Anſwer* to certain *Queſtions* propounded to him by King *James* I. This then is the only *Hereſy* to diſown the *Authority* of the *Roman* (for that he calls the *Catholick*) *Church*. *Again*, ſaith he, *One fundamental Error of the* Proteſtants, *is their denying the* Primacy *of St.* Peter *and his* Succeſſors, *the Foundation which Chriſt laid of his* Church, *neceſſary for the perpetual Government thereof*. And again, *He that forſakes the* Church, *puts himſelf into a dead and damnable State, and may have all things beſides Salvation and Eternal Life*. *Bellarmine* ſpeaks out, and tells us very plainly, *No Man can, tho he would, be ſubject to Chriſt, and communicate with the* Celeſtial Church, *that is not ſubject to the Pope*. If then we believe this *Authority* of the *Roman Church*, we believe all; and if we believe not *this*, we believe nothing at all, in the Papiſts account; or to any better purpoſe, than to our own Damnation. So that without this *Belief* our Faith ſhall never paſs for an *entire* Faith; and when we once believe this, it ſhall never be any more queſtion'd, whether it be *entire* or no.

Bel. de Eccleſ. l. 3. c. 5.

Now

Now it ſeems a very hard matter to believe this great Point of *Faith*, till very good *Reaſons* be given us for it; and yet (it ſhould ſeem) the want of ſuch Reaſons will not excuſe us from being *Hereticks*, and in a State of *Damnation*, no not tho we be never ſo ready to believe it, when we ſhall have *Reaſons* given us for it. *For he is an* Heretick (we are told) *who thinks any thing againſt the* Definition *of the* Church; *yet ſtands ſo affected, that he will think the contrary, if he be convinced by* Arguments, *or if the matter be propounded to him by a Learned Man.* And on the contrary, if we do believe this, we can hardly be *Hereticks*, whatever *Errors* we believe, or this Belief draws us into. For *if a Ruſtick* (ſaith Cardinal *Tolet*) *believe his* Biſhop *about the* Articles of Faith, *teaching him ſome* Heretical Doctrine, *he merits by believing*; *altho it be an Error.* So weighty a Point is this, of believing the *Authority* of the *Roman Church*, and grounding our *entire Faith* upon it; that I perceive I am concern'd above all things to examine it throughly: and this I ſhall have fitter opportunity to do now I am come to the *ſecond* thing propounded.

Bonacin. de Cenſur. D. 2. q. 3. p. 1. *from* Vaſquez *and others.*

Tol. Inſtruct. Sacerd. l. 4. c. 3.

SECT. II.

Hitherto I have been conſidering, what *ground I have to hope for* Salvation, *as I am a* Proteſtant, *and of the* Church *of* England. I am now in the *next* place to enquire, *Whether I can find any Reaſon to believe, that the* Church *of* Rome *can put me into a more* hopeful Way *to it, ſhould I turn* Papiſt, *and be of her* Communion. Now, ſeeing I have already found, that the great *Reaſon*, why we are held uncapable of *Salvation* as now we are, is this; That we have no *entire Faith*; and the *Defect* in our *Faith* is this, That we believe not *all* the *Articles* of the *Roman Faith*; and that which makes it *neceſſary* for us to believe *all* thoſe *Articles*, is the *Authority* of the *Catholick*, that is, as they interpret, the *Roman Church*, to *declare* and *define* what things are *neceſſary* to the *Salvation* of Chriſtians; I perceive I have no more to do for my full Satisfaction

tisfaction in the present Inquiry, but to consider, what *Reason* I can have for the *owning* and *submitting* to this *Authority*. And to discern this, I think this *Method* fittest to be taken: I will inquire into three things;

I. *What things are implied in that* Submission *to this* Authority *which is required of me.*

II. *What the Grounds and Reasons are whereon this* Authority *is founded, and which should perswade me to* submit.

III. *Where this* Authority *may be found, and to whom I must* submit.

And this is all, I think, that I need to do; for I can never think fit to submit my *Faith* and *Conscience*, and to trust my *Salvation* to an *Authority*, which either requires of me such things as are unreasonable, or can produce no *Reason* for it self, or is so lodged in *Obscurity* as it cannot be *found*.

I. I cannot leave the *Communion* of the Church of *England*, and enter into that of *Rome*, in obedience to an *Authority* which commands me to do things *unreasonable*, agreeing neither with the *Nature* of *Mankind*, nor with the undoubted *Principles* of Religion. If therefore the Church of *Rome* require such things of me, I must be a *Protestant* still, and *protest* against that *Authority*, which *She* pretends to. And for ought I can yet see, I cannot submit to her *Authority*, but upon the hardest and most *unreasonable* Terms in the World. I must renounce my *Reason* and my *Judgment*, I must no longer trust my *Senses*, I must either *lay aside*, or learn to speak *dishonourably* of *God's Word*; I must not believe a Word that *God* hath spoken, without that *Church's Leave*; I must embrace a *Religion*, for which, according to that *Church's Principles*, no *Reason* can be given to *convince* me; and when I have thus learn'd to do all things without *Reason*, I must do, what with *Reason* I can never do, believe all Men whatsoever, and how *piously* soever they otherwise live, if they be not of the Ro-

man

man Communion, to be in a State of *Damnation*. If I be *deceiv'd* in any thing of all this, I ſhall be very glad to know it; and I have only this to ſay for my ſelf, that they were *Roman Catholicks*, who ſhould know their own *Religion* beſt, that have deceived me; and if I may be deceiv'd by hearkening to *them*, whom that *Church* ſends abroad to make us *Converts*, I ſhall be the leſs encouraged hereafter, to embrace her *Communion* upon their *Perſwaſions*. Whether all, who are already of her *Communion*, either *own* or *know* all this, it concerns not me to enquire; but I think it a Debt of *Charity*, that I owe them, to think, (till they tell me the contrary) that they do not; and that, if they did, they would not long continue where they are. However, till they, who taught me theſe things, ſhall either confeſs their *own Error*, or ſhew me *my Miſtake*, I muſt needs think them all true; and therefore alſo account it much *ſafer* for me to continue a *Proteſtant*, than to turn *Papiſt*, whatever it may *ſeem*, or *be* to *others*.

Firſt, I think nothing can be plainer, than that it is more *ſafe* to act like *underſtanding*, and *diſcreet*, *conſidering* Men, than *otherwiſe*; or, that the *Religion*, which alloweth Men ſo to do, is *ſafer* than that which doth not allow it. Now the *Proteſtant Religion* alloweth Men to make uſe of their *Reaſon* and *Judgment*, to diſcern between *Truth* and *Falſhood*, *Good* and *Evil*; which the *Roman Religion* (as it ſeems to me) will not allow; and therefore it muſt needs be the *ſafer Religion*.

Chriſt certainly came not into the World to *ſave Sinners* by *deſtroying*, but rather by *reſtoring* and *perfecting* Human Nature. His buſineſs was not to *deprive* us of the uſe of the moſt noble Faculty which God had given us; but to *rectify that*, and all the *reſt*, after they had been depraved by Sin. His *Goſpel* was not preached to *cloſe up* the Eye of the Soul, the Underſtanding, and ſo to lead Men *blindfold* to Heaven; but *to open Mens Eyes, and to turn them from Darkneſs to Light*, Act. 26. 18. The Apoſtles preach'd, to teach us how

to

to offer unto God a *Reaſonable Service*: Rom. 12. 1. And *Chriſt* expects, that *his Sheep ſhould be able to diſcern the voice of him* their *Shepherd*, from the *voice* of *Strangers*; and, *avoiding them*, to *follow him* only; *John* 10. 4, 5. St. *Peter* exhorts Men, to be *always ready to give a Reaſon of the Hope that is in them*; 1 Pet. 3. 15. And St. *Paul* bids Men *prove all things, and hold faſt that which is good*; 1 Theſſ. 5. 21. And St. *John* exhorts, *not to believe every Spirit, but to try the Spirits whether they be of God*; 1 Joh. 4. 1. How any Man ſhall be able to do all this, and much more, which as a *Chriſtian* he is obliged to do, and not be allow'd the free uſe of his *Reaſon* and *judging Faculty*, I am ſure, no Man can tell me; neither indeed how he can be of any *Religion* at all; for before he can really be of any *Religion*, he muſt *chooſe* it; and *chooſe* it he cannot, till he have rationally *conſider'd* and *judg'd* of it, and of the *Reaſons* which muſt move him to the *choice* of it. And in Truth, to deny a Man the free *uſe* of his *Reaſon* and *Judgment* in *Religion*, is to turn him into a *Beaſt*, where he ſhould be moſt a *Man*; and either to make it impoſſible for him to be of any *Religion* at all, and to ſerve *God* like a *Man*; or elſe to ſay in effect, That *Chriſtian Religion* is altogether a moſt *unreaſonable* thing, and proper only to *unreaſonable Creatures*.

Now the *Writing Men* of the *Roman Church* tell us nothing more frequently, than that no *private* Man ought to be allow'd to *judg* for himſelf in matters of *Faith*; that to allow this, is to ſet the *Gate* wide open to all *Hereſies*; that every Man is bound to *ſubmit* and *captivate* his *Underſtanding* and *Judgment* to the *Judgment* of the *Church*, that is, to all the *Definitions* of (as they call it) the *Roman-Catholick Church*. Whatſoever this *Church* affirms, we muſt believe to be *true*; and whatſoever *She* commands, we muſt chearfully *obey*, ſeem the thing to our own *private Reaſon* never ſo *falſe*, or never ſo wicked. We muſt not dare to examine the *Truth* or *Lawfulneſs* of her *Decrees* or *Determinations*, tho *Reaſon*

and

and *Scripture* too, ſeem to us to be againſt them, as we have been lately taught by the *Repreſenter*; for as we receive from *Her* the *Books*, ſo from *Her only* we are to receive the *Senſe* of *Scripture*. Hence it is, that they define a *Heretick*, to be one that *obſtinately* oppoſeth the *Sentence* of the *Church*. The *Doctrines* of *Fathers* (*Bellarmine* ſome-where tells us) may be examined by *Reaſon*, becauſe they teach but as *private Doctors*; but the *Church* teaches as a *Judg*, with all *Authority*, and therefore no Man may *diſpute* the ſoundneſs of her *Doctrine*. This then is the *firſt* ſtep I muſt take, if I will go over to the *Church* of *Rome*; I muſt reſolve to *ſee* no longer for *my ſelf* with my own Eyes, but give my ſelf up to be led by the *Church*, never queſtioning the *Way* I am to go in, ſo long as *ſhe* leads me. And truly ſo far as I am yet able to diſcern with my *Proteſtant Eyes*, it is but needful to cloſe the Eye of *Reaſon* before-hand, when I am about to go, where I muſt otherwiſe ſee ſuch things as no *Reaſon* can indure. It was therefore very *ingennouſly* ſpoken (as I have heard) of Mr. *Creſſy*, when he ſaid, *that the* Wit *and* Judgment *of* Catholicks, *is to* renounce *their own* Judgment, *and* depoſe *their own* Wit. Yet if this be true, I muſt beg his Pardon, if I dare not yet imitate his *Example*, or follow him thither, where (according to him) I can have nothing to do, but to run headlong upon any thing without *Wit* or *Fear*. *Reaſon* he is pleaſed to call a *hoodwink'd Guide*; and following it, all we can hope for, is, that we may poſſibly ſtumble into the *Truth* or *Church*. Poſſibly (it ſhould ſeem) a Man may ſtumble upon it with his *Eyes* in his *Head*; and truly, I dare not *pull* them *out*, leſt I ſhould ſtumble on a *blind Leader*, and we ſhould both fall into the *Ditch*.

Secondly; Whenſoever I reſolve to enter into the *Roman Communion*, I fear I muſt alſo bid farewell to my *Senſes*; or reſolve never any more to truſt them, no, not about thoſe things, which are the *proper Objects* of *Senſe*; to diſcern which, *God* gave me my *Senſes*; and of which it will be

impoſſible for me to have any *diſtinct knowledg* without them.

How *unreaſonable* and *dangerous* a thing this is, I muſt needs be very *ſenſible*, if I be not reſolved already to hearken no more to my *Reaſon*. If I muſt no longer credit my *Eyes* about *Shape* and *Colour*, nor my *Ears* about *Sounds* and *Words*, nor my *Noſe* about *Smells*, nor my *Palate* concerning *Taſts*, nor my *Hands* and *Feeling* about *Hot* and *Cold*, *Hard* and *Soft*; I ſhall not know how to believe, that *God* gave me all theſe *Inſtruments* of *Senſe* to any purpoſe at all; I am ſure, I cannot think my ſelf in a *comfortable* and *ſafe* Condition. I know not to what end our *Bleſſed Saviour* ſhould bid St. *Thomas*, *Handle* and *ſee him*; or how his *Faith* could be thereby *confirmed*, if ſuch *Senſes* are not to be truſted: nor why the *Apoſtle* ſhould hope to have the more Credit given to their *Narratives*, by telling us they were *Eye-witneſſes* of the things they relate; 2 *Pet.* 1. 16. *Luke* 1. 2. Nor why St. *John* (1 *Joh.* 1. 1.) ſhould talk ſo much of *hearing*, *ſeeing* and *handling*, as things qualifying them for bearing *witneſs*. What a Chriſtian am I like to be, if I can have no Aſſurance of what I *ſee* or *hear*; if I may not truſt my *Eyes* when I read the Scripture, nor my *Ears* when I hear the Inſtructions of my Teachers? How could the firſt Chriſtians be ſure themſelves, or aſſure us, that *Jeſus* is the *Chriſt*, if in hearing his *Words*, and ſeeing his *Miracles*, and reading the *Prophets*, they might not ſafely truſt their *Senſes*? If *Senſe* be not to be truſted, all *Teaching* muſt be by immediate Inſpiration; and *Faith* comes not by *hearing*, as St. *Paul* affirms it doth; and the *Infallible Church* can teach no more than we, except ſhe can teach without *Speaking* or *Writing*, or any thing that is to be underſtood by *Hearing* or *Seeing*; and ſo *Oral* and *Practical Tradition* can be of no more uſe to us, than to the *Blind* and *Deaf*. On this Suppoſition, I may eaſily miſtake a *Harlot* for my *Mother*, and ſtumble into *Babylon* inſtead of *Hieruſalem*, hearken to the Voice of the *Wolf* inſtead of the *Shepherd*,

Shepherd, eat and drink *Poiſon* inſtead of *wholſome Food*, and feel no *Pain* nor *Loſs* when my *Eyes* are pluck'd out.

Now if the *Church* of *Rome* do not command us to renounce all *Credit* to our *Senſes*, ſhe cannot command us to give any *Credit* to her Doctrine of *Tranſubſtantiation*. And I fear, without our believing this *Point*, ſhe will not admit us to her *Communion*. We believe already a *Real Preſence* of that which we *ſee not*, yet will not this ſerve, unleſs we believe alſo a *Real Abſence* of that which we both *ſee*, *handle*, *taſte* and *ſmell*. In the holy *Sacrament* of the *Euchariſt*, I am commanded to believe that there is not any *Bread*, but *Fleſh*; nor *Wine*, but *Blood*; and yet there I *ſee*, *ſmell*, *taſte* and *feel* both *Bread* and *Wine*, and nothing elſe. I *hear* it read, that our *Bleſſed Saviour took*, *bleſſed*, *brake* and *gave Bread* and *Wine*; and of the *ſame* he ſaid, *Take*, *eat* and *drink*. I hear St. *Paul* again and again (1 *Cor.* 11. 26, 27, 28.) ſpeak of *eating* and *drinking* the *Bread* and the *Cup*. And yet I muſt not truſt any of theſe *five Senſes*, but againſt the cleareſt *Evidence* and *Teſtimony* of them all, I muſt believe (if I can) that there is neither *Bread* nor *Wine*, but that, which neither my *Senſes* can diſcern, nor my *Reaſon* conceive, nor doth the *Scripture* any where ſay, the very *Natural Fleſh* and *Blood* of *Chriſt*, under the *Colour* and *Form*, the *Taſte* and *Smell*, and all other proper *Qualities* of *Bread* and *Wine*; and yet neither that *Colour*, nor *Form*, nor *Taſte*, nor *Smell*, nor any other *Accident*, which my *Senſes* there perceive, are in the *Fleſh* and *Blood*, tho there is nothing elſe there for them to be in. That tho I *break* and *chew* with my Teeth what I *take* and *eat*; yet I *break* not, nor *chew* with my Teeth the *Body* of *Chriſt*; and yet I *take* and *eat* nothing elſe. If I cannot believe this, I am told that I have not *Faith* enough, and only becauſe I have yet *Reaſon* and *Senſe* too much, to be of that *Communion*. This is another ſtep that I muſt take in going over to the Church of *Rome*. And when I am got thus far, I may think it ſeaſonable enough to lay aſide the

Scripture too: For what good *Uſe* I can make of it, without the free uſe of my *Reaſon*, and truſting my *Senſes*, I do not underſtand.

Thirdly, If I be a *Lay-man*, and not of ſo good credit with the *Curate* or *Biſhop*, as to obtain a *Licenſe*; that is, if I will not promiſe to adhere only to the *Doctrine* of the *Roman Church*, and take all that I read in that *ſenſe only*, which ſhe is pleas'd to give it; I muſt not be ſuffer'd to read the *Scripture* at all, but muſt give away my *Bible*, upon pain of being denied the *Remiſſion* of my *Sins*. And truly if I may be allow'd to read it upon no other *terms*, than of being thus tied up, to learn nothing by it, but what I am before-hand taught without it; I ſhall think a *Licenſe* too dear, even at a very *low* rate; if yet it may be obtain'd, as I find it queſtion'd, whether it may or no, any where elſe, but in ſuch places as a *Licenſe* to read ſome of their *own*, may prevent their itch of looking into *our Tranſlations*. However, whether I be of the *Lay* or *Clergy*, if I will learn of them who are moſt buſy in endeavouring my *Converſion*; I am ſure I muſt be taught to ſpeak very *diſhonourably* of the *Word of God*; and this ſeems to be no more than the *Religion* commended to me requireth.

I muſt needs here ſay, That nothing in the World *doth* (and I think I may ſay, *ought*) more to prejudice me againſt any *Religion*, than to find it conſtrain'd in its own *Defence*, to ſay *undecent* things of that which it grants to be the *Word of God*. And if I might be thought worthy to adviſe the *Miſſionaries*, they ſhould not harp too much on this *ungrateful* String, if they would draw any after them that have the leaſt *Zeal* for *God's Honour*. I am verily oerſwaded, that the *good Langnage* they beſtow upon the *Scripture*, hath kept more out of their *Church*, than ever their *Arguments* yet won. I will not now take notice of thoſe too well known *Encomiums* beſtow'd upon it, by ſome of their *Communion*, calling it a *Noſe of Wax*, a *Leaden Rule*, a *dead Letter*, *unſens'd*

ſens'd Characters, and I am aſhamed to ſay what more. I ſhall only obſerve what is ordinarily taught us and endeavour'd with much *Art* to be prov'd by their *beſt*, moſt *modeſt*, and generally *approved Authors:* as, That the *Scripture* is not *Neceſſary*; that it hath no *Authority* as to us, but from the *Church*; that it is an *imperfect*, an *inſufficient Rule*; that it is an *obſcure Book*, and finally, a very *dangerous* one to be read by the *People.*

I know very well, That the *Repreſenter*, and others of them tell us, *That the* Papiſt *believes it damnable in any one, to think, ſpeak, or to do any thing irreverently towards the* Scripture, *and that he holds it in the higheſt Veneration of all Men living.* I know alſo, that moſt of them, even whilſt they are induſtriouſly proving all that I but now ſaid, do yet labour to *mollify* and *ſweeten* their own *harſh Expreſſions*, which they know muſt needs grate the *Ears* of all *pious* Perſons. I am alſo verily perſwaded, that many *Papiſts* have a very *venerable eſteem* for the *Scripture*, and are not a little *troubled* to hear it *reproachfully* uſed. And yet I cannot ſee that *higheſt Veneration* for it, or that they ſpeak not very *irreverently* of it, who ſpeak no worſe of it, than the *Repreſenter* himſelf hath taught them, *viz. That it is not fit to be read generally of all without Licenſe*; tho he gives this very good reaſon for it, *Leſt they ſhould no longer acknowledg the Authority of the* Roman *Church*; or in his own words, *No Authority left by Chriſt, to which they are to ſubmit.* As tho Men might be taught by the *Scripture* to be diſobedient to any *Authority* which *Chriſt* hath ſet up in his *Church.* I cannot ſee any great *Veneration* he hath to the *Scripture*, in ſaying, *They allow a reſtraint upon the reading of the* Scriptures, *for the preventing of a blind ignorant Preſumption, or the caſting of the Holy to Dogs, or Pearls to Swine,* (ſuch too is his reſpect for *Chriſtians*) *That he hath no other aſſurance that they are the Word of God, but by the Authority*

and

and Canon of the Church. That almoſt every Text of the Bible *and even thoſe that concern the moſt eſſential and fundamental Points of the Chriſtian Religion may be interpreted ſeveral ways, and made to ſignify things contrary to one another. That it is altogether ſilent, without diſcovering which of all thoſe Senſes is that intended by the Holy Ghoſt, and leading to Truth; and which are erroneous and Antichriſtian. That a Man may frame as many* Creeds *as he pleaſes, and make Chriſt and his Apoſtles ſpeak what ſhall be moſt agreeable to his Humour, and ſuit beſt with his Intereſt, and find plain Proofs for all. That it alone can be no Rule of* Faith *to any private or particular Perſon.* Certainly they who talk of the *Scripture* at this rate, have not the *higheſt Veneration* for it, of all Men living.

They that ſay, and labour to *prove*, that the *Scripture* is not *neceſſary*, may well be ſuppoſed to think, that the *Church* of *God* might do well enough without it. And, tho to leſſen the *Odiouſneſs* of this *Aſſertion*, they are forced to confeſs it is a *Lie*, without the help of ſome ſuch *mental Reſervation* as this, *So that God could not, if he pleas'd, preſerve his Truth among Men, ſome other way than by writing it*; yet doth not this ſpeak in them the *like Veneration* for the *Scripture*, as *Proteſtants* have, who down-rightly affirm it to be *neceſſary*. And it muſt needs ſound ill to ſay, That the *All-wiſe God* hath been very careful to leave and preſerve in his *Church* an *unneceſſary thing*. Yea, 'tis altogether as abſurd to ſay, the *Scripture* is not *neceſſary*, *becauſe* God *could, if it had ſeem'd good to him, have preſerv'd his* Church *and* Faith *without it*: As it would be to ſay, that *Plowing* and *Sowing*, or *Eating* and *Drinking* are not *neceſſary*, becauſe *God* could, if he pleas'd, make the Ground bring forth without the *one*, and preſerve Man's Life without the *other*. Nor can it be imagin'd that any Man upon this account only, would venture to ſay, and attempt to prove the *Scripture* not to be *neceſſary* in

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a ſenſe, wherein no Man ever *affirm'd* it; if he were not ſo *zealouſly* bent upon *leſſening* the *Eſteem* which we have for it, that he will chuſe rather to ſay *nothing* to the *purpoſe*, and *diſpute* againſt no Body, than to be *ſilent*, and ſay *nothing* that *ſounds ill* of it; and that he thinks it needful for the *ends* of his *Church* ſo to do.

In like manner, when they contend that the *Authority* of the *Scripture* is from the *Church*, which is the thing whereof at every turn they are forward enough to mind us; they are forced again to make ſome *Abatements* to make it ſeem a *Truth*. 'Tis true, they ſay, that conſider'd in *it ſelf alone*, it hath its *Authority* from *God*; whereby they can mean no more, but that *God* is the *Author* of it; but in relation to *us*, it hath its *Authority* from the *Church*. Now I would fain know, what any Man can underſtand properly by the *Authority* of the *Scripture*, but its relation to *us*, or the *Power* it hath to *command* our *Faith* in it, and *Obedience* to it, as the *Word* of *God*. And if it have all *this Power* from the *Church*, as is confidently affirm'd, then tho *it ſelf* be of *God*, yet *all* its Authority is from the Church; and it muſt needs be true, which was ſaid by one of them, *That it is of no more Authority than* Livy *or* Æſop's Fables *without the* Churches Declaration. Thus is the Authority of *God's Word* made to depend upon the Authority of *Men*, and all our Faith is no more but *humane* Faith reſting upon humane *Teſtimony*. And if the Authority which it hath to oblige *us*, be from the *Church*, I would know by what Authority it doth oblige the *Church*; it is not ſure, by any Authority from *Her*, for then I ſee no reaſon why the *Church* may not *chuſe* whether ſhe will *receive* it or no; whilſt yet I think, that it is only by the Authority of the *Scripture* that ſhe can pretend to be a *Church*, and to have any Authority at all. However this I am ſure of, that they who ſay the *Scripture* is to be receiv'd for the Churches

Sake,

Sake, have not ſo *high a Veneration*, either for *it*, or the *Author* of it, as they who ſay it is to be receiv'd for *God's Sake*.

And in the *next* place, whether *we*, who ſay the *Scripture* is a *perfect* and *ſufficient Rule* of *Faith* and *Manners*, containing all things *neceſſary* to *Salvation*; or *they*, who ſay, 'tis but a *partial* and *imperfect Rule*: *We*, who ſay; 'tis *plain* and *eaſy* to be underſtood in all things *neceſſary*; or *They*, who ſay 'tis *dark* and *obſcure*, unable to *inform* and *reſolve Learners*, *Doubters*, and *Inquirers*, and that even in *Eſſentials* and *Fundamentals* of *Religion*: Finally, Whether *We*, who ſay, it ought to be *read* and *ſtudied* of *all* Men; Or *They*, who ſay, it is not *needful*, yea, *dangerous* to be read of *all*, have the *higher Veneration* for the Holy *Scripture*, is no hard matter to determine; if to *commend* a thing, may be ſaid to be more *Honour* to it, than to *diſparage* it. And tho here again, they uſe ſome *Art* and *Colour* to ſet off ſuch *ill-favour'd* Sayings, as well as they can; yet ſerves this to no other end in my Mind, but to make them more *Ugly* and *Odious*.

They deny not (for all this, they ſay) the *Perfection*, *Sufficiency*, or *Plainneſs* of the *Scripture*, nor that it may be *read* by the *People*. What then is it they ſay? They affirm, that it contains all *neceſſary Truths*, either *Explicitly*, or at leaſt *Virtually*; for ſome *Truths* it declares *expreſly*, and yet ſo, as the *Church alone* muſt give the *Senſe*; and for all the reſt, it *plainly* (if the ſame *Church* may here alſo give the *Senſe*) ſends us to the *Church* to learn them. Now I cannot (for my Heart) imagine what all this can ſignify, but only a deſire to *leſſen* the *Scripture*'s *Authority*, as *plauſibly* as they can. To me it ſeems very plain, that they make the *Scripture* juſt *nothing*, and the *Church all* in *all*.

I think

I think it here again, well deſerves my *Conſideration*, That the SCRIPTURE is very *copious* in *declaring*, and *repeating* too, over and over again, many *neceſſary* Points of *Faith* and *Duty*; and not only *neceſſary* things, but many other things alſo it largely teacheth, which are by all granted to be of leſs *moment* and *neceſſity* to the *Salvation* of Men; and all this it doth in as *plain Words* and *Phraſes*, as can be uſed. And hence I find it very hard for me to believe, that the HOLY GHOST, by whoſe *Inſpiration* it was *Written*, ſhould do all this for our *Inſtruction*, and that in a *Book* written on *purpoſe* to make us *wiſe* unto *Salvation*, and by *himſelf* declared *able* ſo to do, and yet omit many things of *greateſt neceſſity* to that end; never ſo much as once, no not in any *obſcure* manner, pointing out to us that *Church*, to whoſe *Authority* we muſt *reſort* and *ſubmit*. This were to leave us a *Treaſure* cloſely *lock'd* up, and not to tell us where we may find the *Key*, that can let us in to it, and ſo we are neither the *Wiſer*, nor the *Richer* for it.

Whatſoever the PAPISTS are pleas'd to alledg for their ſpeaking thus of the *Word* of the *Bleſſed God*, I confeſs I cannot think any better of their *Religion* for it. Let us ſay what we will in *Commendation* of holy SCRIPTURE, they will be ſure to find ſomething to ſay againſt it; leſt, I ſuppoſe, it ſhould be thought, we can at any time ſpeak *Truth*. And when we charge them for ſpeaking *diſhonourably* of the SCRIPTURE, they ſo interpret their Words, as they ſeem to ſay the ſame that we did, and which they blamed us for. What can be their *meaning* in this, but either to make the World believe that we are in an *Error*; tho, when they come to *Apologize* for themſelves, they are forced to *confeſs* it a *Truth*; or that their *Religion* neceſſarily requires it of them in its *Vindication*, to *vilify* the SCRIPTURE; tho by ſaying ſuch things of it, as they acknowledg cannot be *true*, unleſs interpreted ſo, as to ſpeak *our Senſe*? They muſt therefore in this, deal either very *diſingenuouſly* with *us*, or very

injuriouſly with the holy SCRIPTURE. For my part, I cannot believe, that Men profeſſing the *Chriſtian Faith*, and owning the SCRIPTURE to be the *Word* of GOD, could ever be perſuaded to ſpeak ſo, as but *ſeemingly* to *vilify* or *diſparage* it, if their *Doctrines* could be any other way defended. Their *Religion*, I ſay, muſt need it, or *they* too little conſult the *Honour* of their *Religion*, in needleſly uttering ſuch Speeches, as ſtand in need of a very great meaſure of *Charity*, to think them leſs than *Blaſphemy*.

Fourthly, If any PROTESTANT dares venture thus far, towards the *Church* of ROME; the *next* thing he has to do, is to reſolve, not to believe one *Word* that GOD ſpeaks, without that *Church's leave*. I am confident, that there are not many of our *Lay*-PAPISTS, that think themſelves to be under this *Obligation*; and that if they were ſenſible of it, they would make haſte to break looſe from it. But for my own part, I ſee not how I can enter into their *Communion*, but I muſt draw it upon my ſelf. And this I think, would be to advance the ROMAN *Church* to as great a *height* in my eſteem, as *they* in her, who are moſt zealous for her Infallibility, can deſire. What more would they have, than that GOD *himſelf*, where they confeſs *he ſpeaks*, ſhould ſtand to their *Church's Courteſy*, whether or no he ſhould be *believed*? I know it will be ſaid, They never diſallow'd any man to *believe* GOD. But becauſe all men cannot *underſtand* GOD ſpeaking in the SCRIPTURE, the *Church* is appointed by *Him* to be his *Interpreter*. This I hear, and to me it ſounds not well, That GOD ſhould ſpeak to Men things *neceſſary* for *all* to know, and which he *commands all* to *learn* and *believe* upon pain of eternal *Damnation*; and yet not ſpeak ſo *intelligibly*, as they may underſtand Him. Certainly, he that made the *Tongue*, and gave man *Underſtanding*, can ſpeak (if he pleaſe) as *Intelligibly* as the *Church*, which cannot *Speak* or *Underſtand* at all, without

without his *Help* and *Teaching*. And considering his *Infinite Goodness* and *Impartiality*; till he shall tell me so *himself*, I know not how to *believe* that he hath so much more *respect* to the *Honour* of the ROMAN *Church*, than to the *Salvation* of *Mankind*, that he would so deliver things belonging to *Salvation*, that no Man can be able to *understand*, and be the *better* for them, but he that resorts to that *Church* as God's sole *Interpreter*. And if indeed she be so, it must follow, that we cannot believe one *Word* that God *speaks* without *her leave*. For, therefore is she made *God's Interpreter*, because otherwise we cannot *understand* his *Word*; and I am sure, what we cannot *understand*, we cannot *believe*. 'Tis the *Sense*, they say, and not the *Letter*, is *God's Word*; and this *Sense* is in the *Church's Breast*, and of *Her alone* we must learn it; and therefore, till She give us *leave*, we cannot *believe* it, no not so much as, that JESUS is the CHRIST; altho, till we believe *this*, we cannot believe that he hath a *Church*, and therefore cannot believe She is *His Interpreter*.

I will not now inquire into the Reasons, Why this *Church*, which is *God's sole Interpreter*, takes so excellent a Course to make her *Children* understand *God's Word*. Why *first*, She keeps it in the *Latin Tongue* only, whereof the far greater number of them understand not one Syllable. Why *secondly*, She doth not give them some *Infallible Translation*, *Interpretation*, or *Comment* of the *Scripture*; a thing very easie for an *Infallible Interpreter* to do; and therefore, in my Opinion, must argue a great *defect* in her *Charity*, and much *unfaithfulness* in the discharge of her *Trust*, if she do it not. I am loath to ask such *Questions* as these, because I find it goes so much against the Hair to answer them. Indeed I think she doth not the *latter* for a very good Reason, because *she cannot*; and 'tis only her vain *pretence* to such a *Power*, that makes her *inexcusable* if she do it not. And the *former* she is concern'd to do, that they, who have the *Word*

of God only in a *Language* which they cannot *underſtand*, may be conſtrain'd of neceſſity to *depend* upon her *Inſtruction*, and never to queſtion her *Authority*, nor diſcern her *Errors*. Whilſt they have nothing of the *Word of God*, but from her mouth, they can have no more of it, than what ſhe gives them *leave* to have; and therefore, can neither believe a *Word* of what GOD *ſpeaks*, nor indeed that he hath *ſpoken* any thing but by her *leave*.

God ſpeaks very *plainly*, and *intelligibly* enough in the *ſecond Commandment*, forbidding the *Adoration of Images*, as plainly, as he forbids to *commit Adultery*, or to *Steal*. And *Chriſt* ſpake very *plainly*, and as *intelligibly*, ſaying, *Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, and him only ſhalt thou ſerve*, Matt. 4. 10. And again, when he ſaid of the *Euchariſtical* Cup, *Drink ye all of it*, Matt. 26. 27. as when he ſaid, *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy Neighbour as thy ſelf*. St. *Paul* very *plainly* ordereth, that the *publick Worſhip* of *God* be perform'd in a *known Tongue*, and ſheweth the great *abſurdity* of uſing an *unknown Tongue* in *God's Worſhip*, 1 Cor. 14. And he ſpeaks *intelligibly* enough, when he ſaith, *Let a man examine himſelf, and ſo let him eat of that Bread, and drink of that Cup*, 1 Cor. 11. 28. To ſay no more, we think it *plainly* enough ſaid, of them that *die in the Lord, that they reſt from their labours*, Rev. 14. 13. In all theſe things we hear *God ſpeak*, and would fain *believe him*. But here the *Church* of ROME comes in with her *Authority*, and tells us, That, tho GOD have ſaid, *He only is to be worſhipped*, we muſt *believe*, that *not he only*, but alſo the *Croſs*, *Images*, *Saints* and *Angels*, are to have a ſhare in our *Religious Worſhip*. And ſay CHRIST and his *Apoſtles* what they pleaſe to the contrary, we muſt believe, that not *all*, but the *ſacrificing Prieſt* ought to *drink of the Cup*; that *God's publick Worſhip* is well perform'd in an *unknown Tongue*; that we neither *eat Bread*, nor *drink Wine* in the *Euchariſt*; that *all who died in the Lord, do not reſt from*

* *their*

their labours; but that the moſt of them go into moſt *dreadful torments*. At this rate, for ought I can ſee, muſt I believe the *Word of God*, when I have once ſubmitted to the *Authority* of the *Church* of ROME.

Fifthly, It ſeems very hard for me to conceive how I ſhould be bound under penalty of *Eternal Damnation*, to eſpouſe a *Religion*, and ſubmit to an *Authority*, for which no *convincing Reaſon* can be given me by them that invite me to it. What is it in any *Religion*, which can *commend* it before others to a man's *Choice*, but its *Truth* and *Goodneſs*? And how ſhould the *Truth* and *Goodneſs* of any *Religion* commend it to my *Choice*, till they be *diſcover'd* unto me, and I be *rationally convinced* that it hath them? Whatever *Truth* and *Goodneſs* there may really be in the *Religion* called POPERY, I am ſure they can be no *motives* to me to embrace it, till they be clearly laid open to my *Underſtanding* and *Judgment*, that I may plainly diſcern them; and therefore, if any PAPIST will take an *effectual* courſe to *Convert* me to it, he muſt by *rational* means *convince* me firſt, that *his* is the *true Church*, and her *Doctrines ſound* and *good*.

How he can do this upon his own *Principles*, I ſee not yet; but rather think it a very groſs *abſurdity* in *him* to attempt it. He tells me often, that no *private* Perſon, ſuch as I am, ought to *judg* for *himſelf* in Points of *Faith*, or therein to follow his own *private Judgment*, tho to him grounded both on *Reaſon* and *Scripture*. He muſt not therefore in diſputing with me, (according to his own *Doctrine*) bring either *Reaſon* or *Scripture* to *convince* me, for I muſt not truſt my own *private Judgment*, (and I know no other that I have) tho (as it ſeems to me) grounded both on *Reaſon* and *Scripture*. I muſt not *judg* for *my ſelf* by *either* of them, whether what he commends to me by them, be *true* or *no*, and then I cannot imagine to what end he uſeth them in any diſpute with me. He muſt reſolve therefore, (for ought I can

I can ſee) whenever he would *convert* me, to *judg* for me too, as well as *diſpute* with me; and then, if I cannot make a right *Choice* for *my ſelf*, he may do it for me; tho after all, whether *his private Judgment* be any more to be truſted in ſuch a caſe, than *my own*, I may poſſibly doubt.

Either it is a matter of *Faith*, That the *Church* of ROME is the *only true Church*, and that *She* hath this *Authority* of *determining* for all *Chriſtians*, which is the *ſaving Faith* of CHRIST, or it is not. If it be *not*, I may be ſafe enough, tho I *believe* it not; and 'tis ill done of PAPISTS to terrify me with theſe *big Words*, which are as *falſe* as *terrible*, That I cannot be *ſaved* without *believing this*. If it be a matter of *Faith*, then muſt I either be allow'd to *judg* for my ſelf by my *own private judgment* in a matter of *Faith*, or all the PAPISTS endeavours to *perſuade* me to believe it, are altogether *vain*, unleſs it be *reaſonable* for me to believe a thing againſt my *Reaſon* and *Judgment*. When he uſeth *Arguments*, I ſhould think he meant thereby to *convince* me in my *private Judgment*; but it ſeems, 'tis only to drive me *out* of it; and that, if I may *uſe* it at all, it is only to this *end*, that I may conclude I have *no uſe* of it. All the *Arguments* in the World cannot *convince* me, till I *judg* of them; and therefore no PAPIST can offer me a *Reaſon* why I ſhould embrace POPERY, but he muſt *contradict himſelf*, and give me as ſtrong a *Reaſon*, why I ſhould not embrace it, becauſe its *Principles* are *falſe*. It will be all one, as if he ſhould ſay, I *ought* to be *convinced* by *Reaſon*, and yet I neither *ought* nor *can* be *convinced* by it. In urging his *Reaſons* upon me, he intends they ſhould *convince* me; in *denying* me the *Liberty* of *judging* for my ſelf by *Reaſon*, he denies that any *Reaſons* can *convince* me; becauſe 'tis plain, they cannot *convince* me before I have *judged* of them, and this I muſt do by my *private Judgment*, or by nothing, for I have no other.

But here I am told, We are allow'd to make uſe of our *Reaſon* to find out the *true Church*, which may *Infallibly* guide

us

us into all *saving Truth*. All that is required of us, is this, that when we have once found this *true Church*, we presume no longer to *judg* for our selves, but *captivate* our *Reason* to the *Infallible Judgment* of the *Church*. This is something, and yet it seems but extorted from them, to make a little more *plausible*, what to me seems one of the greatest pieces of *Folly* in the World; I mean, the attempt of *convincing* men by *Reason*, who must not be allow'd to *judg* of the *Reasons* whereby they must be *convinced*. I find *Reason*, by a *Traditionary Papist*, compared to a *dim-sighted Man*, *who used his Reason to find a trusty Friend to lead him in the Twilight, and then reli'd on his Guidance rationally, without using his own Reason at all about the way it self*. Thus are we allow'd *Reason* to find out the *Church* of ROME, our *sure Friend* to *guide* us, and on whose *Guidance* we must *rationally Rely*, after we have captivated our *Reason* to her, and for her sake have resolved to use it no more. But now, if this *Reason*, which is to direct us to our *Guide*, be such a *dimsighted* thing, and as we heard before, *Hoodwink'd* too, so that whilst we follow it, we can have no more hope, than only that we may *possibly stumble* into the *Catholick Church*; who will secure us, that we shall not in this *Twilight* mistake a *treacherous Enemy* for a *trusty Friend*; and then, what shall we gain by our *rational Reliance* on him? A *dimsighted* Man in the *Twilight*, may easily *mistake* one thing for another, else should he not much need a *trusty Guide*; and why he may not *mistake* his *Guide*, as well as his *Way*, I do not yet know.

But that I may be satisfied, how much I gain by this liberal *Concession*, to use my *Reason* and *private Judgment* in inquiring after the *true Church*; I will a little consider, how the PAPIST is wont to talk with me, when he would persuade me to take his *Church* for my only sure *Guide*. *First*, he tells me, *There is but one true Faith*; and then, *that this Faith must be held entirely*; next, *that this entire Faith is no-*

 where

where to be found, but in the true Church. After this he begins again, and tells me, *Chriſt hath a Church upon Earth*; That *there is but one true Church*; That *out of it there is no Salvation*; and laſtly, *That the* ROMAN *Church, and no other, is that one true Church out of which there is no Salvation.* And till we have found that it is ſo, he will give us leave to *judg* for *our ſelves.* And I would thank him for this *kindneſs*, if he would allow me to enjoy the *benefit* of it, and to make any *uſe* of it; otherwiſe it will look but like a *Mockery.* I deſire therefore ſome clear *convincing Evidence*, That the ROMAN *Church* is the *only true Church.* He cannot to this purpoſe, produce the *Conſent* of all *Chriſtians*, for *two* parts in *three* deny it. Therefore he gives me a great many *Marks* or *Signs*, ſometimes *more*, ſometimes *fewer*, whereby the *only true Church* muſt be known from others, and ſpends a great many words in ſhewing me how they agree to the ROMAN *Church*, and no other. That wherein I would next have ſame Satisfaction, is, ſuppoſing that all his *Marks* agree to the ROMAN *Church*, and no other; how I may know, that theſe are indeed the *certain* and *incommunicable Marks* and *Proprieties* of the *only true Church?* To prove this, he betakes himſelf to the HOLY SCRIPTURE, and brings me thence ſome *Texts*, whereby he ſays, they are clearly proved to be ſo. I now, with a very hearty and ſincere deſire to learn the *Truth*, and with all diligent uſe of ſuch helps, as I can come by, *read* and *conſider* all theſe *Texts*, and cannot diſcern in them any *Evidence* at all of the thing which they are brought to *prove*; and therefore think it reaſonable yet to call for ſome *clearer proof.* But now, when 'tis come to this, I preſently find, that his *liberal Conceſſion* to make *uſe* of my *Reaſon* and *private Judgment* to find out the *true Church*, amounts to no more than I at firſt ſuſpected, that is juſt *nothing*: For here he retires to his *Principle* of POPERY, That I being a *private Perſon*, ought not to *judg for my ſelf*, what is the *Senſe* of thoſe *Texts* of *Scripture*, but

but must submit my *Reason* and *Judgment*, to the *Judgment* of the *Church* (yea, even before I have *found* the *Church*) and without any *dispute*, receive the *Sense* of *Scripture* from her alone Thus he recals at once all that he had allow'd; and undoes again, whatsoever he had been adoing, to *persuade* me to his *Communion*. He was giving me *Reasons*, which might *convince* me in my *Judgment*; and these at length resolve all into the *Authority* of the *Scripture*; and yet, of this *Testimony* of the *Scripture* I must not *Judg*; and therefore by it I cannot be *convinced* of any thing, but this, that the *Church* of ROME is resolved to be *Mistress* of all *Christians*; and thinks it enough to *convince* us that she is so, if whilst she sets some of her *Sons* to hold us up in empty talk of *Scripture* and *Reason* to no purpose, she step out from behind the Curtain, saying, *Believe it, I am she.*

Now I cannot possibly see, whatever others may do, (for I keep yet to my *Protestant Principles* of Judging for *no man* but *my self*) how I can embrace POPERY upon any *conviction* from PAPISTS; and I fear I must either take it *without* any *Reason* for it, or not at all. If I cannot know the ROMAN *Church* to be the only *true Church*, but by the *Testimony* of the SCRIPTURE; and if I cannot understand the *Testimony* of the SCRIPTURE, till I receive the true *Sense* of it from the ROMAN Church; and if I cannot take that for the true *Sense* of it, upon *Her Declaration* of it so to be, unless moved by her *Authority*, I must be persuaded to do the most *unreasonable* thing in the World, to my thinking; to believe a *Church* to be the *only true Church*, for her own *Authority*, which I yet know no more, than I do her to be the *true Church*; which, it is all along supposed, I do not know at all; This I think not only *unreasonable*, but *impossible*.

I must needs confess my self very hard to be persuaded of the tender goodness of that *Mother*, who, lest her Children should get hurt by the *dimness* of their *sight*, will needs pull out their *Eyes*, and keep them in her Pocket, till she has

taught them to uſe them better. I am very loath to part with my *Reaſon*, how *dimſighted* ſoever, becauſe I know not how to *ſerve God* without it. Yet if I ſhould dare to venture thus far, may I now have leave to take my *reſt* here? If my *dimſighted Reaſon* help me to *ſtumble* into my *Mother*'s lap, may I yet think my ſelf *ſafe* there? Not till I have learn'd her *Charity* too as well as her *Faith*, which the REPRESENTER tells us, *She learn'd of Chriſt and his Apoſtles.*

Therefore, *Laſtly*, I muſt believe, that all other *Chriſtians* but PAPISTS, are in a ſtate of *Damnation.* The Decree of P. *BONIFACE* the VIIIth, as now it ſtands in the *common Extravagants*, is well known to be this, *We declare, ſay, define, and pronounce, That it is altogether of neceſſity to* SALVATION, *that every Creature be ſubject to the* POPE of ROME. P. *PIUS* the II. in his *Bull of Retractation*, (tho he was not altogether of the ſame mind (as it ſeems) before, whilſt he was *Æneas Sylvius*) ſaith, *He cannot be ſaved that doth not hold the Unity of the* ROMAN *Church.* If ſo luſty a *Decree*, and ſo preremptory a *Declaration* of two POPES be too little, there is abundance more to this purpoſe to be met with, by him that has a mind to ſearch for it: I only take notice at this time, that P. *LEO* the X*th*, in his *Lateran Council*, and his *Bull* therein read and paſs'd, ſaith, *We do renew and approve that ſame Conſtitution* (*viz.* of P. *BONIFACE*, but now mentioned), *the preſent Sacred Council alſo approving it.* And *Laſtly*, P. *PIUS* the IV*th*, in his *Bull*, wherein he confirms the *Council* of *TRENT*, impoſeth an *Oath* upon *Eccleſiaſtical* Perſons, wherein they ſwear, *That the* HOLY CATHOLICK *and* APOSTOLICK ROMAN *Church, is the* MOTHER *and* MISTRESS *of all Churches; and that this is the true* CATHOLICK FAITH, *without which no man can be* SAVED. Here's enough in all Conſcience for us PROTESTANTS to *hear*, and too much a great deal (as I think) for any man to *believe.*

I think

I think my ſelf bound in *Charity*, to have the beſt Opinion I can of all men; and therefore I dare not think, that all they who are called ROMAN CATHOLICKS, have throughly learn'd this *Doctrine*. There ſeems to me to be ſo much of *Ill-nature* in it, that I ſhould think my ſelf the worſt natur'd man in the World, if I could believe that any conſiderable numbers of them, beſides the *Prieſts*, are guilty of it. Many *piouſly* diſpoſed Souls, are not ſo happy, as to have always the *cleareſt Underſtandings*, or the *ſincereſt Teachers*, but have better *Hearts* than either *Heads* or *Guides*. Their *Zeal* is too great for both their *opportunities* of *Learning*, and *Patience* to *conſider*; their *earneſtneſs* of SALVATION, a thing very *laudable* in them, puts them into too much *haſte* to *deliberate* long, and gives an advantage to ſome, who watch for it, to abuſe them. Either a *cunning* JESUIT, or a *canting* FANATICK, will hope to make an eaſy Prey of ſuch Perſons; for it matters not greatly of which ſort the *Tempter* be, whilſt the *Temptation* is the ſame: The *Fiſh* minds not the *Fiſher*, but the *Bait*: Every *Argument* from either, is edged with a mighty *Zeal* and *Importunity*, and ſharpned with the *fineſt* and moſt *penetrating* Expreſſions of a moſt tender *Compaſſion* for *periſhing Souls*. SALVATION is as *confidently* promiſed, as *earneſtly* deſired; and whether it be to be had in the ROMANISTS *Infallible Church*, or in the SEPARATISTS *purg'd* and *unmix'd Congregation*, all's a caſe, when once the man is made to think it cannot be had in the *Church* of *ENGLAND*. If they who are ſo eaſily *Proſelyted* either way, would take time to *look* before they *leap*, and could but ſee into the *conſequents* of thoſe very *Arguments* which moſt prevail with them, and are made the *Traps* to catch them in, they would *ſtand off* a little, and ask a few *Queſtions* more, for their better Satisfaction; before they could endure to think of entring into a *Communion*, which would oblige them, as ever they hope to be *ſaved* themſelves, to believe that CHRIST hath no faithful *Fol-*

lowers upon Earth, but a few *Subjects* of the POPE of *Rome*.

I can eaſily perceive, by divers *Books* written by them who call themſelves *Converts*, that the main *Motive* of their going over to the ROMAN *Church*, was this, That they could not hope to be *ſaved* in any other: And I find that moſt *Arguments* of late uſed, to perſuade us to that *Religion*, look the very ſame way; And it is this *Doctrine* alone, that hath put me upon this *Enquiry* for my *own Satisfaction*: For I muſt needs confeſs, that this *Doctrine*, which ſome acount ſo powerful a *Perſuaſive* to *Popery*, has always with me had the quite *contrary effect* to what I find it hath in them; and has been, and is at this preſent to me, as ſtrong a *Diſſuaſive* from it. If I can never be a PAPIST, till I can *believe* it, I am very confident, I ſhall never be one. I would leave the *Church* of *ENGLAND* the next Minute, ſhould ſhe require of me to *believe*, *that all out of her Communion were in a ſtate of Damnation*; and truly I think that moſt PROTESTANTS are of my mind.

When therefore I found the REPRESENTER in good earneſt to vindicate his *Church* in this one Point, I preſently concluded, that he had writ his *whole Book* to no purpoſe; for let him ſpend all his *Oyl* and *Colours* in painting POPERY to the beſt advantage, ſo long as this one *Spot* appears in her *Face*, ſhe may poſſibly ſeem in her new Dreſs *leſs terrible*, but not one jot *more lovely*. Having told us, *That no one can arrive to the true knowledg of the Catholick Faith, but by receiving it as propoſed and believed by the Church of* CHRIST; *and that the* ROMAN CATHOLICK *is the only true Church*; *that whoſoever denies any Article of her Faith, denies ſo much of* CHRIST's *Doctrine*; *That whoſoever hears Her, hears* CHRIST; *and whoſoever obſtinately and wilfully is ſeparated from Her, is in the ſame diſtance ſeparated from* CHRIST *himſelf*; and finally, *That God addeth to this Church daily, ſuch as ſhall be ſaved*: He hath told us enough to perſuade

perſuade us, that no PROTESTANT in the World could have done that *Church* a greater *diskindneſs*, than he hath done; nor by any *Miſrepreſentation* of her, have worſe *Repreſented* her.

When the PAPISTS are pleas'd to ask us that *unanſwerable Queſtion*, as they account it, *Where was your Religion before* LUTHER? They wiſh us withal, to take into our *Serious Conſideration*, the *ſtate* of our *Forefathers*, who lived and died in the *Religion* of the *Church* of *ROME*; asking us, if we dare think, that they were all *damn'd*: We need not trouble our heads with ſhaping an *Anſwer* to ſo *frivolous* a *Queſtion*, becauſe we durſt never yet be ſo hardy as to affirm, that all are *damn'd*, who live and die in the *Communion* of the *Church* of *ROME*; but do openly declare to the World, that tho we think our own *Religion* the ſafeſt, yet many of that *Communion* have been heretofore, and many alſo are at this day, under ſuch *Circumſtances*, as encourage us to hope very well of them as to their *future ſtate*. However if it ſo well deſerve our Conſideration, what's become of our *Forefathers*? doth it not as well deſerve the Conſideration of the ROMANISTS, what is become of many of *theirs*? Yea, What will become of the greateſt part of the *Chriſtian World*, who live and die out of their *Communion*? And if they would have us think the *worſe* of the *Reformation*, leſt by thinking well of it, we ſhould be wanting in *Charity* to our *Fathers*, which yet we are by it no way obliged to be; ſhould it not move them to think the *worſe* of their *Religion*, that it conſtrains them to think *ſo uncharitably*, not only of their *Fathers*, but of all the *World* but themſelves only?

How many moſt Eminent and Worthy *Perſons*, How many great and famous *Churches*, muſt I be obliged, by embracing the *ROMAN Faith*, to believe excluded from SALVATION? Upon theſe terms, I cannot ſee how 'tis poſſible for me to be *Reconciled* to the *Church* of *ROME*, without profeſſing my ſelf an *irreconcileable Enemy* to all the *Chriſtian World*

World beſides. I muſt turn *Hector*, and call all other *Chriſtians*, *damn'd Hereticks*. I muſt needs ſay, this appears not to me, like that *Meek* and *Lamb-like Spirit* of the *Bleſſed* JESUS, which is given by him to his *Dove-like Spouſe*, that thus *Rants* it in his pretended *Vicars*, and their Adherents. It ſeems not to be much a kin to that *Chriſtian Charity*, which *hopeth* and *believeth all things*, *and thinketh no evil*, 1 Cor. 13. 7.

I muſt make nothing of condemning all PROTESTANTS and PROTESTANT *Churches*, of what other *Denomination* ſoever; and theſe alone are no inconſiderable part of *Chriſtians*: *Theſe Hereticks* (ſaith *Bellarmin*) *poſſeſs many and ample Provinces*, *ENGLAND*, *SCOTLAND*, (and why not *IRELAND?*) *DENMARK*, *SWEEDLAND*, *NORWAY*; *no ſmall part of GERMANY*, *POLAND*, *BOHEMIA*, and *HUNGARY*; he might have ſaid alſo, of *FRANCE*, and *HELVETIA*. It was anciently the Cuſtom, (ſaith *Tolet*) that the POPE did *three days* every year, tho now but *once* a year, *viz.* upon the *Holy Thurſday* (he means the *Thurſday* immediately before *Eaſter*, call'd *Cœna Domini*) with great Solemnity, before all the People, thunder out his *Sentence* of *Excommunication* againſt all *Hereticks*, of what *Name* or *Sect* ſoever; but againſt the *Queen* of *ENGLAND* (which was then Q. *Elizabeth*) by *name*; with all their *Believers*, *Receivers*, *Favourers*, *and Defenders*; againſt all that *read* their *Books publickly* or *privately*, with what *intention* ſoever, or under whatever *pretence*, tho there be no *Error* in them, or with a deſign to *confute* the *Error*, if there be any without his *Holineſs's Licenſe*; againſt the *Keepers*, *Printers*, and *Defenders*, in any manner, of the ſame; againſt all *Schiſmaticks*, and ſuch as pertinaciouſly withdraw themſelves, and depart from their *Obedience* to the POPE; againſt any one that ſhall ſo much as ſay, that *Calvin* was a *good man*; againſt all that appeal from the *Orders*, *Decrees*, or *Mandates* of the POPE, to a *future* COUNCIL. And 'tis very well known, that they are not all PROTESTANTS who have done ſo.

Inſtr. Sacerd. l. 1. c. 18.

† Neither

Neither will this ſuffice, I muſt alſo condemn the whole *GREEK Church*, which how *Ancient*, and of how *large Extent* it is, is very well known: And ſome reaſon there ſeems to be for it; For (ſaith *Bellarmin*) *the* Greeks *in the year* 451, *in the Council of* CHALCEDON, *conſiſting of* 600 *Biſhops, endeavoured to make the Patriarch of* CONSTANTINOPLE *equal to the Biſhop of* ROME. And again, *In the year* 1054, *they pronounc'd the Biſhop of* ROME *to have fallen from his degree of Dignity, and the Biſhop of* CONSTANTINOPLE *to be the firſt Biſhop.* And tho he pretends that theſe *Greeks* were once *reconciled* to *ROME* in the *Council of* FLORENCE, yet he adds, that *they always returned to their Vomit.* No wonder therefore, if this *GREEK Church* cannot eſcape *Damnation*: And yet this poor *Reprobated Church* yields not to that of *ROME* in any of her own principal *Marks* of a *true Church.* I read that the *Chriſtians* of her *Communion*, in *NATOLIA, CIRCASSIA, MENGRELLIA, RUSSIA, GREECE, MACEDONIA, EPIRUS, THRACIA, BULGARIA*, &c. do very near, if not quite, equal the number of thoſe who are of the *ROMAN Communion.* Prefat de Rom. Pontif.

And yet will not this be enough, unleſs we include in this *Sentence* of *Condemnation*, all the *Aſſyrian Chriſtians* living amongſt the *Mahometans* in *BABYLON, ASSYRIA, MESOPOTAMIA, PARTHIA* and *MEDIA*, with the *Jacobites, Armenians, Egyptians, Æthiopians*, and the vaſt *Empire* of the *HABASSINES:* All theſe I muſt look upon as cut off from CHRIST, merely for their diſowning the POPE's *Authority*, tho they ſhould be found *Orthodox* in all other points. And truly I know not how to get up to that *height* of *Boldneſs*, not to be afraid of condemning ſo many *Chriſtians*, moſt of which have given, and do yet give to the World the moſt notable *Teſtimony* of *Fidelity* to CHRIST, that can be expected, in their conſtant *ſufferings* for the *ſake* of his holy *Name* and *Goſpel.*

After

After this Conſideration of *whole Churches*, it ſeems needleſs for me to come down to that of *ſingle Perſons*, tho confeſſedly of *greateſt Note* and *Eminence* in the *Church* of CHRIST, both for *Learning* and *Piety*. How *St.* Polycarp *Biſhop* of *SMYRNA*, and a famous *Martyr*, who would not obey P. *Anicetus*, but ſtill keep his *Eaſter* contrary to the cuſtom of the *ROMAN Church*, and therein ſeem'd either as *ignorant* of his Duty, or as *ſtubborn* as any PROTESTANT: or how his *Succeſſor* in that *See*, *Polycrates*, who defended *himſelf* and his *Church* ſo arrogantly againſt the *Authority* of the *ROMAM Church*, more than ſufficiently declared by P. *Victor*, ſtill pleading the *Example* of *Polycarp*, and *Authority* of St. *John*, as tho he had never heard St. *Peter* was made *Prince* of the *Apoſtles*, or that the *Biſhops* of *ROME* were his *Succeſſors* in that *Authority* over all *Churches*. How *Irenæus* and all his *Fellow-Biſhops* of the *Gallican* Church, who ſo preſumptuouſly took upon them to *expoſtulate* the matter with the ſame *Victor*, and in very homely terms to chide him for *excommunicating* thoſe *Aſian* Chriſtians for not changing their Ancient Cuſtoms at his Command. How St. *Cyprian* the holy *Biſhop* of *Carthage*, and *Martyr*, with his *Biſhops* of *Africa*, *Numidia* and *Mauritania*, joining with him in ſo contumaciouſly reſiſting P. *Stephen*: The *Sixty Biſhops* in the *Milevitan* Council; or thoſe *Two hundred* and *Seventeen*, whereof the famous St. *Auſtin* was one, who not only ſtubbornly *rejected* the Claim, but alſo manifeſtly *demonſtrated* the *Fraudulence* and *Forgery* of *three* POPES, *Zoſimus*, *Boniface* and *Cæleſtine*, about appeals to *ROME*. How all theſe ſhall be exempted from this Cenſure, I know not. Did not the later of theſe *African* Councils decree, *That the Biſhop of the firſt See* (meaning *ROME*) *ſhould not be call'd the Prince of Prieſts, or chief Prieſt, or any ſuch thing, but only the Biſhop of the firſt See?* Did it not *Excommunicate* every *Prieſt* that ſhould *Appeal to ROME?* It ſeems to me, that St. *Athanaſius* could have

have no great opinion of the *Infallibility* of *P. Liberius*, when, through fear, himself had forgot he had any such thing, and consented with the *Arrians* to the Condemnation of that holy *Father*. St. *Hierom* seems not to have had any thoughts of the POPES's *Supremacy*, when he said, That *whereever there is a Bishop, whether at great* ROME, *or petty* Eugubium, *he is of the same Merit and Priesthood*. Neither did either *he* or St. *Austin* seem to have had a just esteem for the *Church* of *ROME*'s *Authority*, when they preferred that of the *Eastern* Church before it, in receiving the *Epistle* to the *Hebrews* into the Canon of SCRIPTURE. Above all, what must I think of their *Great Saint. P. Gregory* the *First*, who called the *Title* of UNIVERSAL BISHOP, a *new Title*, which none of his *Predecessors* ever used, *a name of Vanity, a Profane Name, wicked, and not to be uttered, yea a Blasphemous*; saying, *that whosoever desired it, shew'd himself to be the forerunner of Antichrist?* If I must believe this great POPE and SAINT, I know well enough what to think of most of his *Successors* in the *Infallible Chair*; If I must not believe *Him*, why must I believe *those* who *succeeded* him? Had not *He* and *They* one and the same *Authority* as POPES of ROME? Believe *both* I cannot; and disbelieving *either*, as all PAPISTS, no less than I, must disbelieve the one, I am no better than a *Heretick*, and uncapable of *Salvation*.

Farther yet, I find that the *African Council*, but now mention'd, did alledg for it self the *Sixth Canon* of the *First General Council* held at NICE, which is this, *Let the old Custom be kept through* Ægypt, Lybia *and* Pentapolis, *so that the Bishop of* ALEXANDRIA *have power over all these, because the Bishop of* ROME *hath also the like Custom*. By this *Canon* these *two Bishops* seem to be made equal in *Power*. In the *Fourth General Council* held at *Calcedon*, and *Ninth Canon*, it is ordered, *That if any* Bishop *or* Clerk *have a Controversie with the* Metropolitan *of that Province, they have recourse to the* Primate *of the* Diocese, *or certainly to the See of the Royal City*

of Constantinople, *that the business may be ended there.* This *Council* seems hereby to make the *Bishop* of *Constantinople* equal to the *Bishop* of *Rome*; and this it did, notwithstanding great *opposition* made against it by P. *Leo* the *First*. So that I must involve in the same *Censure* of *Condemnation* some of the most *Famous General Councils* that ever were. This I am apt to think a very daring matter, and not rashly to be attempted. I have indeed been taught by our *Blessed* JESUS, that *God* will not *forgive* us, if we do not *forgive* our *Brethren*; but I do not remember, where he hath taught me, that *God* will not SAVE us, except we *believe* that no man but a PAPIST can be SAVED.

II. I have now consider'd some of the many *Difficulties* I am to struggle with, before I can get through to the *Church* of ROME. And truly they seem to me, whatever men of more *strength* and *courage* may think, little less than *Insuperable*. And yet after all this, if I may be convinced that the *Authority* of the ROMAN *Church* hath sufficient grounds of *Scripture* and *Reason* to support it, I must confess no *Difficulty* in my way ought to dishearten me from breaking through it. But then again, if I must believe that there is such an *uncontrollable Power* in the *Church*, in some *One Church*, in the ROMAN *Church* by name, yea, in the *Bishop* of that *Church*; and if I must so believe this, that I must not leave in my Soul any room at all for the least *Charitable thought* of any man's *Salvation*, who believes it not: I think it no less than needful, that I have the *Clearest* and most *undeniable Evidence* in the World for what I believe, lest the Sentence of *Condemnation* should *recoil* upon my self for my *Temerity* and *Uncharitableness*.

Indeed if this *Church* may be allow'd to bear *witness* to its own *Authority*, and such a *Testimony* be *sufficient*, I cannot want it. The *Council* of TRENT hath more than once call'd her, the *Mother* and *Mistriss* of all *Churches*. So *Infallible* in her *Judgment* and *Directions*, so *Absolute* in her *Dominion*

and

and *Command* ſhe muſt be, that Her *ſole Authority* muſt be warrant enough, and nothing elſe any warrant without it, for all things that belong to *Chriſtian Religion*. *Whoſoever* (ſaith *Becanus* in his *Compendium*) *in matters of Faith and Religion followeth the true Church of Chriſt* (which he there proveth to be the *Roman Church* only) *cannot err about Faith and Religion, ſeeing the true Church of Chriſt is Infallible.* And this we are told continually, as this *Jeſuit* doth ſay, *that this is the ſhorteſt Compendium of all Controverſies.* This then being to ſupport the whole *Fabrick* of POPERY, had need to ſtand on *firm* ground.

This *ground* I would now fain diſcover. Why then muſt we believe that the ROMAN *Church* hath this *Sovereign Authority* in *Religion?* I muſt confeſs my ſelf one of thoſe ſturdy *Hereticks*, that cannot believe without *Reaſon*. When I hear that *Church* telling me, ſhe is *Infallible*, and hath all *Power* over all other *Churches*; I cannot believe it till I have ſome better *reaſon* for it than this, That She muſt be all that, which She is pleaſed to ſay of her ſelf; and therefore muſt be *Infallible* and *Omnipotent too*, if She ſay it. And I am a little troubled to ſay, that this is all I can get out of her for my ſatisfaction, leſt even PROTESTANTS ſhould think I ſay *incredible* things of her, and that I have no other deſign, but to make all the *Learned* Men of her *Communion* ſeem *ridiculous*, in talking to us as to *Children*, always *childiſhly*. But it is not in my *power*, to make their *Arguments* better than they are; nor *Civil* in me to teach them what to ſay; and I am ſure my *Temporal Intereſt* cannot at this time tempt me to overſee the *ſtrength* of their *Reaſons*. The very beſt *Reaſons* I have yet met with, with how much *Artifice* and *Sophiſtry* ſoever they are dreſs'd up, amount to no *more*, nor *better*, in my opinion, than her own *boneſt Word*, that is, her own *Authority* and *Infallibility* for proof of her *Authority* and *Infallibility*; and therefore I muſt either believe them *both*, before I can believe them, even whilſt I am *enquiring* for a *reaſon*

why I ſhould *believe* them, or I muſt not believe them at all, nor with her conſent be ſaved.

The *Miſſionaries* tell us, they are willing to undergo any *Pains* or *Difficulty* to reſcue us from damning *Error*; and whilſt they proceed in this *Method*, I have cauſe to believe them; for I am confident, to prove their *Church* hath this *Authority* they contend for, is as great a *Difficulty* as they can meet with. If they ſhould here offer us (what is ſo much talk'd of by them) the *Teſtimony* of the *Univerſal Church*, there is nothing more plain, than that they do but *Mock* us. For this can be nothing elſe but the *Church* of ROME's *Teſtimony* for her own *Authority*. It cannot, I ſay, be any thing elſe, becauſe the thing they are proving is, *That She alone is the* One, Holy, Catholick *and* Apoſtolick *Church*: And were it any thing elſe, they would never diſcover it to us, becauſe they would thereby give us an *unanſwerable Argument* againſt what they would prove her to be; for if they will ſhew us any other *Church* or *Churches* by the *Teſtimony* whereof Her *Authority* may be proved, we are thereby enabled to prove *She* is not the *Only true Church out of which there is no Salvation*. What then can this *Teſtimony* be? Is it that of the *Firſt* and *pureſt* Ages of the *Church* before POPERY was brought forth? Not ſo to be ſure, for POPERY was (they ſay) from the *beginning*, and glorieth of her *Antiquity* above all things. Is it the *Teſtimony* of *all others* in the World that profeſs *Chriſtianity*? It cannot be, for all theſe, if not of her *Communion*, are *Hereticks*, and in a ſtate of *Damnation* for denying her *Authority*; and were it poſſible for them to *witneſs* that to be which they *deny* to be, yet is their *Teſtimony invalid*, becauſe they confeſs themſelves *Fallible*, and this point of *Faith* cannot ſtand upon a *fallible Teſtimony*. By this 'tis very clear to me, that the *Teſtimony* of the *Catholick Church* of *Chriſt*, if it be produced for the *Authority* of the *Church* of ROME, can be nothing elſe but the *Church* of ROME's own *Word*; and I never doubted, but ſhe hath a *good word* for

her

her ſelf, any more than I doubt leſt it ſhould be thought a *good proof* of her *Authority*.

I have heard again much talk of *Univerſal Tradition* among ROMAM CATHOLICKS; but if they alledg this for their *Church's Authority*, they give us only the ſame thing again in other Words. *Univerſal Tradition* can be nothing elſe but the *Teſtimony* of the *Univerſal Church*, and that muſt be the *Church* of ROME; and ſo we are not advanced one ſtep farther than we were before. The Credit we are to give unto *Univerſal Tradition*, depends on the *Authority* of the ROMAN *Church*, which we have not yet *found*, but are *enquiring* after.

If *Fathers* and *Councils* be brought in to *Witneſs* this *Authority*, all the noiſe they make will prove but the *Voice* of the ROMAN *Church*, crying her ſelf up for the great *Diana* of the World, and thundring *Anathema* to all that will not fall down and worſhip her. Will ſhe abide by the *Teſtimony* of either *Father* or *Council*, if they ſpeak not what ſhe has taught them, or againſt what ſhe holds? Or ſhall they be allow'd to over-rule the *Oral* and *Practical Tradition* of the *preſent Church of* ROME? Are *Councils* of any *Credit* more than the POPE's *Confirmation* gives them? And are ſingle *Fathers* of more *Credit* than they? If not, we have yet no more but her *own Word* for her *own Authority*.

If they bring us SCRIPTURE to prove this *Authority*, I muſt ſay, that as we reverence *Fathers* and *Councils*, ſo we *adore* (with *Tertullian*) *the fulneſs of the* SCRIPTURE, neither can we deſire any better *Proof*, than its *Teſtimony*. Yet when I conſider how theſe men uſe the SCRIPTURE; I am at a ſtand to think, how they can in good earneſt produce it as a *Witneſs* in this matter; for after they have ſaid almoſt all the *ill* they can of it, calling it *imperfect*, *inſufficient*, *obſcure*, *unſens'd*; they ſeem to *ridicule* both *it* and *us*, when they bring it forth, thus *diſabled*, for a *Witneſs*. Do not they tell us again and again, that both the *Canon* and the *Senſe* of

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SCRIPTURE, depend, as to us, on the *Authority* and *Interpretation* of their *Church?* And can its *Teſtimony* then poſſibly amount to any more than that *Church's bare Word?* Do not they deny us a *Judgment* of *Diſcretion*, whereby we ſhould diſcern for our ſelves, whether it ſpeak *for* or *againſt* their *Church's Authority?* And will they yet produce it to convince us of the *Authority* by which alone we are both to *receive* and *underſtand* it? It cannot be produced to *convince* us in our *Judgment*, for we are not allow'd any uſe of our *Judgment* in the Caſe. It muſt be only to *convince themſelves* that we are *Hereticks*; and I dare ſay, that may be done without the *Scripture*, as well as with it, whilſt their *Church* muſt give the *Senſe* of it.

But becauſe they know we magnify it, they will *produce* it, tho I cannot ſee to what other end, than to perſuade us to take heed of *truſting* too *much* to it, or thinking it worth any thing, after it hath ſhew'd us the *true Church*. It muſt be believ'd no longer than it is *authorized* to ſpeak by that *Authority*, which is to be *proved* by it; ſo that by ſhewing us that *Authority*, it loſeth all its own *Authority* for ever. *For this* (ſaith *Stapleton*) *that God hath commanded us to believe the Church, we do not hang our Faith on the Authority of the Church, as upon the proper and ſole cauſe of this Belief, but partly on manifeſt Scriptures, by which we are remitted to the teaching of the Church; partly on the Creed*, &c. This then is the end of *producing* the *Scripture*, that we may be *convinced* by it, that we are no longer to *learn* of it, after we are once brought by it to the knowledg of the *Church's Authority*, but thenceforward are to depend wholly upon the *teaching* of the *Church*, unto which it *remits* us. All the *uſe* then that we have of the *Scripture*, is to be *guided* by it to the *Church* of ROME (tho it cannot do ſo much for us neither, but as that *Church guides it*); and having thank'd it for its kindneſs, we are then to bid it good Night.

Stapleton Tripl. c. 15.

Now ſeeing *manifeſt Scriptures* are promiſed us, to guide us to the ROMAN *Church*, I think it reaſonable to expect, that

that they produce ſuch *Scriptures* as are more *manifeſt* to us, than their *Church's Authority*, which is to be proved by them; ſeeing it is by their *Evidence* I am to be *convinced* of that, which as yet is *unevident* to me. Neither ought the *Senſe* of theſe *manifeſt Scriptures* depend upon the *Interpretation* or *Authority* of that *Church*, the *Authority* whereof they are brought to *prove*, as a thing to me not yet *evident*; for ſo, I ſhall be ſtill but where I was before; and inſtead of *manifeſt Scriptures*, be ſhuffled off with the *Church's bare Word*; I mean, with ſuch *Interpretations* of *Scripture*, as I have no reaſon to receive, but by that *Authority* whereof I am yet, at leaſt, in doubt.

Now, that there are indeed no ſuch *manifeſt Scriptures*, I am reaſonably well aſſured before-hand. I have read the *Scripture* over and over, and find not the leaſt mention therein made of this *Authority* of the ROMAN *Church*. The POPE of ROME, or his *Supremacy*, is never once named from the beginning of the *Bible* to the end; nor can I meet with one *Syllable* touching either the *Infallibility* or *Juriſdiction* of *Him*, or his *Councils*, or of any kind of *Subjection* due to *either*, from all *Chriſtians*. I cannot ſo much as find there, that ever there was any *Biſhop* of ROME, or that there *ſhould* be any there *afterwards*, much leſs that all *Chriſtians* are to own that *Biſhop* for their *Head*, and *Chriſt's Vicar*. And finding nothing of all this, I muſt needs wonder, how *manifeſt Scriptures* ſhould be produced, to prove this *Supreme Authority* over all Churches. And yet, if there be ſuch an *Authority*, and if it be ſo *neceſſary* for all *Chriſtians* to *believe* it, and *ſubmit* unto it; I cannot but think that it ought to have been as *manifeſtly* declared in *Scripture*, as any other point whatſoever. St. *Peter*, in whom this *Authority* is ſaid to have been firſt ſetled, ſaith not a word of it in his *Epiſtles*. St. *Paul* in his *Epiſtle* to the *Romans*, who ſhould in all reaſon have been beſt acquainted with it, ſays nothing at all of it. To the *Civil Magiſtrate*, which

which the *Church* of ROME makes to be much *inferior* to the *Church* in *Authority*, they both teach us our Duty; and ſtrange it is, if they knew of any ſuch thing, that they ſhould not as plainly inſtruct us in our Duty to the POPE or *Church* of ROME wherein our *Salvation*, the main thing they were to take care for, is ſo deeply concern'd.

But what are theſe *manifeſt Scriptures* at length? I find our *Bleſſed Saviour* ſaying to St. *Peter* (Matt. 16. 18.) *Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hell ſhall not prevail againſt it. And I will give unto thee the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven*, &c. but I find not that all this, whatever it may ſignify, was *manifeſtly* ſaid to the *Biſhops* of ROME. *The plain and obvious Senſe* (ſaith *Bellarmin*) *of theſe words is, that we may underſtand the Primacy of the whole Church to be promiſed to Saint* Peter, *under two Metaphors.* And yet, by all the *Light* that he is able to afford me, I cannot diſcern in theſe words, whatever was promiſed to St. *Peter*, the *Supremacy*, much leſs the *Monarchy* of the *Biſhop* of ROME over all *Churches*. And it is no wonder if a *Proteſtant Heretick* be ſo blind, when ſuch eminent Perſons as *Origen*, St. *Auſtin*, St. *Hilary*, *Ambroſe*, *Chryſoſtome* and *Cyril*, could no more ſee it than I, as the learned *Cardinal* himſelf there confeſſeth. Nay, here's not a word to aſſure us, that this *Rock* muſt needs be a *Monarch* inveſted with a *Supremacy* of *Power* over the whole *Church*, or that this *Monarch* muſt needs be the *Biſhop* of ROME, or that the *Gates of Hell ſhall never prevail againſt the* ROMAN *Church*; for all this, we muſt be beholden to that *Church's own Word*, or we ſhall never find it in this place.

De Rom. Pont. l. 1. c. 10.

I find again, that *Chriſt* commanded St. *Peter* (Joh. 21. 16.) to *feed his Sheep*, and *his Lambs*; as indeed it is the Duty of all *Paſtors* of the *Church* to do; and both St. *Peter* (1 *Pet.* 5. 2.) and St. *Paul* (*Acts* 20. 28.) tell us as much; and ſo much the apter am I to doubt, whether the POPE be ſo much

much as a *good Paſtor* of *Chriſt's Sheep* or no, ſeeing he takes ſo little care to *Feed*, and ſo much to *Fleece* them. I am ſure I read of no more but one *chief Shepherd*, and *Biſhop of Souls*, which St. *Peter* tells us, is *Chriſt* JESUS himſelf, 1 *Pet.* 2. 25. The *Apoſtles* were all *Shepherds* under *Him*; but where is this *manifeſt Scripture* to ſhew that St. *Peter* was made *Head-Shepherd*, with Commiſſion to *Feed* and *Rule* too, not only the *Sheep*, but the *Shepherds* alſo? But eſpecially, where is the *Commiſſion* given to the *Biſhops* of ROME ſucceſſively for ever, to *govern* the whole *Flock* of *Chriſt*, with *Soveraign Authority*? *Feed* the *whole*, I am ſure he neither doth, nor can.

Many *great* and *wonderful* things (as *Bellarmin* tells us) are ſaid of St. *Peter* in the Holy *Scripture*, and very *deſervedly*, for he was a very *great* and *eminent Apoſtle*. But the *Scripture* never ſaith, That he was a great *Monarch*, nor that he was *Biſhop* of ROME, nor that he had a *Throne*, or but a *Chair* there; and leaſt of all, that this *Imaginary Monarchy* was to deſcend unto the next *Biſhop* of ROME, and to his *Succeſſors* for ever; and that St. *John*, who long out-lived St. *Peter*, became thereby *ſubject* to ſome of thoſe *Biſhops*, which did not well ſuit with the *Dignity* of an *Apoſtle*.

I read thoſe words of St. *Paul*, 1 Cor. 12. 21. *The head cannot ſay to the feet, I have no need of you.* But that the POPE is the *Head*, and all *Chriſtians*, *Kings*, as well as others, the *Feet*; I may poſſibly read in ſome ſuch *Jeſuit* as *Bellarmin*, but I am ſure I ſhall never read it in the *Scripture*.

Many more ſuch parcels of *Scripture* as theſe, they give us; but after the moſt ſerious peruſal of them all, I profeſs I cannot find any thing like *manifeſt Scripture* for the *Authority* of the ROMAN *Church*. And therefore it ſeems yet as plain to me, as that *Two* and *Three* make *Five*, that the *bare Word* of that *Church*, without any kind of ſolid *Proof*, is all that ſhe hath to ſhew for her *Authority*. She ſays great things of *her ſelf*, and talks ſometimes of *Scripture*, but

much more of *Fathers* and *Councils*, and *Universal Tradition*, and indeed every thing that's *Venerable*; but when all is *spell'd* and *put together*, 'tis but the *Oral* and *Practical Tradition* of the *present Church*, that is, her own very *confident Asseveration*.

If we have a little *Scripture* for Fashion's sake, we must take it as she hath taught it to speak in her own *Vulgar Latin*, which the *Council* of TRENT was even then pleas'd to make the only *Authentick Translation*, when it was confessedly very *faulty*, and hath been since that divers times corrected. And then we must take it in her own *Sense* too, tho we know not well where we may be sure to find it. Her *private Doctors* she will not allow us to trust for it, nor indeed do we find them any better agreed about it, than others are, only they have for the most part either the *Modesty* or *Cunning* to refer all to the *Judgment* of *Mother Church*, could they but tell us where to find it; for she is loath, once for all, in some *publick Comment*, or *Exposition* of the *Scripture*, to tell us what it is. If we may be allow'd to hear the *Testimony* of the *Fathers*, she must stand at their *Elbows*, and *prompt* them what to say; we must have them in her own approved *Editions*; and if they have been at *School* long enough in the *Vatican*, or some *Religious House*, 'tis probable they were reasonably well instructed in her own *Language*, before they were allow'd to go abroad again. However, ere they pass the *Press*, an *Expurgatory Index* can teach them either to *Speak*, or to be *Silent*, as she thinks most *seasonable*. *Councils* may be heard, but only such as have his *Holiness's stamp* upon them; and how we can understand them any better than the *Scripture*, till he *Interprets* for us, is hard to say. So that all returns to this still, That we have her *honest Word* for her *Authority*; and this is the *sole Foundation*, that I can discover of this *prodigious Faith*, which we must all *have*, or else *perish* eternally.

III. And

III. And now, in the *laſt* place, ſeeing it is come to this, for ought I ſee, that I muſt reſt upon her *own Word*, or nothing, for the *Truth* of her *Sovereign Authority*, and muſt upon peril of my own *Damnation*, take upon me this *invidious Profeſſion*, to believe all men *damn'd* but PAPISTS, that I may enjoy the *Bleſſing* of my *Mother*; I ſhould be glad to know, that *She her ſelf* (as *Infallible* as ſhe is) could but *probably* aſſure me, where this *Word* of her's may certainly be *found*.

The REPRESENTER indeed (in his *confident* way) hath told me, *That all the Members of his Religion (however ſpread through the World) agree like one man in every Article of their Faith.* And if we would know for our learning, by what happy *means* this wonderful *Agreement* is effected, he tells us, *It is by an equal Submiſſion to the Determinations of their Church*; that is, as I underſtand it, by taking her *bare Word* for every thing. *No one of them* (ſaith he) *tho the moſt learned and wiſe, ever following any other Rule in their Faith beſides this, of unanimouſly believing as the Church of God* (or ROMAN *Church*) *believes.* And if this be ſo, I wonder to what purpoſe their *Learning* and *Wiſdom* can ſerve them, any more than their *Judgment* and *Wit*, which they have *renounced* and *depoſed*. However, if this be true *Repreſenting*, I ſhall not, I hope, find it difficult to find out the *Church's Word* and *Authority*, on which my *Faith* muſt ſtand. Every *Member* of it, tho he have no more than the *old Collier's Faith*, can help me to it in any part of the World, for all *agree* like *one Man* in *every Article*, and therefore ſure in this moſt *fundamental* one. But what now ſhall I think after this, if it ſhould ſo fall out, that hardly *one* in a *hundred* of theſe *Members* know either *where* this *Church* of theirs is to be *found*, or what thoſe *Determinations* of hers are, unto which they ſo *unanimouſly* ſubmit? Nay, what if their *Church* it ſelf cannot tell them this? When *She* hath ſaid all She can, to inform both *them* and *us*, ſuppoſe it be ſtill *two* to *one*, that we ſhall be *miſtaken* in it, whatever we take to be

the ROMAN *Church*, or her *infallible Word*? This is it, that I am now, for a *Cloſe*, to *inquire* into.

It muſt needs ſeem more than a little abſurd, and exceeding hard, to tye a man under pain of *Damnation*, to believe he knows not what, and what no body can certainly ſhew him; I mean, a *Power* in the *Church* of *ROME*, which all men deny, but they of her *Communion*; and about which, even they who are of her *Communion*, are ſo *divided* among themſelves, that I do not ſee how ever they can *agree* about it. Is there no *Diſpute* in that *Church* about this *Power*? Have they not been even at Daggers drawing among themſelves about it? Is the *Controverſie* yet decided? Or can any one promiſe me that it ever ſhall? *There is a great Diverſity among the Schoolmen* (ſaith our REPRESENTER) *in their Divinity-Points, and Opinions of ſuch matters as are no Articles of Faith, and have no relation to it, but as ſome Circumſtance or Manner, which being never defined by the Church, may be maintain'd ſeverally, either this way, or that way, without any breach of Faith, or injury to their Religion.* I will not ſtay here to ask him, what greater *diverſity* he can find amongſt the *Members* of our *Church*, than he here grants to be amongſt PAPISTS; nor why our *Diviſions* being no greater than *theirs*, nor more nearly related to any *Article* of *Faith*, ſhould be leſs conſiſtent with the *Unity* of the *Church* (as is commonly objected againſt us) than *theirs* are: But I ask, whether the *Supreme Authority* of the *ROMAN Church*, be an *Article* of the *ROMAN Faith*, or no? And again, whether all the *Members* of that *Church*, be as one *man* unanimouſly agreed about it, or no? He will ſay, it may be, about the *Article* they are, as to the *Subſtance* of it, tho not as to all *Circumſtances*: But now if it appear, that theſe *Circumſtances* of the *Power* about which they *differ*, are ſuch as the thing it ſelf will be as good as nothing without them; or if they be not as *certainly known* and *believ'd*, as the *Power* it ſelf, I think it will follow, that all their *agreement* about the

the *Thing*, is as good as nothing too, till these *Circumstances* be also *agreed* upon.

Thus it is then; I must for my *Salvation* believe that, there is such a thing as a *Supreme Power* over *all Churches*, in the *Church* of *ROME*; and in this all PAPISTS as *one man* unanimously *agree*; but about the Circumstances of this Power, there is a great *diversity* of *Opinions* among them; yet is this no injury to their *Religion*. Tho without a better *agreement* about these Circumstances, no man (in my opinion) can be able to satisfie me, what their *Religion* is; for these Circumstances about which they differ, are no more but such *inconsiderable* things as these, *Whence* this *Power* is; whether it be of *God*, or of *Men*; of *Divine* or *Human Right* only; whether it extends over all the *World*, or over all *Christians* only; to *Spiritual* concerns only, or to *Temporals* also; *where* it resides and is lodg'd; in the *Church-Diffusive*, or all *Christians*, especially the *Pastors*; or in the *Church-Representative*, or *General Councils*; or in the *Church-Virtual*, or the POPE of *ROME*. These *petty* Circumstances they *differ* about, and the Church it self knows not how to *agree* them; but what's all this to the *Article* it self, most firmly believ'd by all, that is, a *Supreme Power in the* Church? All their *Religion* rests on the *Determinations* of their Church; all the *force* of these *Determinations* to oblige the *Faith* of men, depend on this *Supreme Power*; May not a man, however, well enough be assured of his *Religion*, tho no man can tell him, *Whence* this *Power* is, Over *what* it is, or *Where* it is? Indeed, what other men can do, I know not; but for my own part, I must needs think it a very hard matter to believe this *Power*, and to have any *certainty* of the *Religion* founded on this *Power*, without some better Information about these Circumstances of it; and therefore before I can yield to be of that *Religion*, I must beseech that Church, which will not allow us to be *saved*, without an *absolute Submission* and *Resignation* of our selves to her *Authority*, to tell us, if not *Whence* (which is yet

yet the moſt material Circumſtance of all the reſt) yet, at leaſt, *What* and *Where* it is.

There is challeng'd by this Church, a *Power* of *over-ruling* our *Faith* by her *Infallible Judgment*, and a *Power* of *commanding our Obedience* by her *Soveraignty*. It will therefore concern me to ask, How I may be rightly inform'd in both theſe great branches of her *Power*, unto which my *ſubjection* is required upon pain of *Damnation*.

1. She claims a *Power* of *Interpreting* or giving the certain *Senſe* of *Scripture*, of *Judging* and finally *Deciding* all *Controverſies* of Religion, of *peremptorily Defining* and *Determining* in all matters of *Faith* and *Religious Practice*; ſo that all are bound, without any further *diſpute* or ſearch, to *ſubmit* to all her *Determinations* and *Decrees*. INFALLIBLE then, we muſt believe this *Church* to be, and that ſhe cannot *Err* in her *Definitions* of *Faith* and *Manners*: And yet where this INFALLIBILITY is to be *found*, is a *Queſtion* ſhe is not to this day able to *reſolve*: In ſhort, I find that this *Infallible* Church, which tells us that ſhe cannot *Err*, when ſhe is deſired to make this apparent to the World, can tell us certainly, both *How*, and in *What* ſhe *can Err*; and in this I doubt not, but ſhe is *Infallible* enough; but *who* they are in all her Communion, or in *what things* it is, that they *cannot err*, this ſhe could never tell us *certainly*, and yet it is *this alone* that can make her *Infallibility*, (if ſhe have it) to be of any uſe to us.

The REPRESENTER ſaith, *That the* PAPIST *believes that the Paſtors and Prelates of his Church, are Fallible; that there is none of them* (and yet the POPE is one of them, and COUNCILS are made up of them) *but may fall into Errors, Hereſy and Schiſm, and conſequently are ſubject to miſtakes.* And further he tells us, *That tho ſome allow the* POPE *the aſſiſtance of a Divine Infallibility, without being in a General Council; yet he is ſatisfied 'tis only their Opinion, and not their Faith, there being no obligation from the Church, of aſſenting to*

* any

any ſuch Doctrine. And tho he maintain the *Neceſſity* and *Right* of General Councils *lawfully Aſſembled*, yet is it not ſo plain, whether he count them *infallible* or no, by what he ſays in that Chapter of Councils. This we are told, *That if any thing contrary to what Chriſt taught, and his Apoſtles, ſhould be defined and commanded to be believed, even by ten thouſand Councils, he believes it damnable in any one to receive it.* But in the following Chapter, he ſpeaks out, and ſays, That *by the Aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt, they are ſpecially protected from all Error, in all Definitions and Declarations in matters of Faith*: And this is true, tho he grants it poſſible, that the *Paſtors* and *Prelates* there *aſſembled*, may be *proud, ignorant, covetous, enormous ſinners, and infamous for other vices, and at other times may prevaricate, make Innovations in Faith, and teach erroneous Doctrines.* Now a man would think, That if all the *Guides* and *Paſtors* of the *Flock* (not *one* excepted) may *err*, then the *Sheep*, which are bound to follow their *Shepherds*, may *err* alſo; and if the *Fallible* lead the *Fallible*, 'tis not *impoſſible* for both to *err*; and who it is that is *infallible*, is hard to ſee. And again, ſeeing he tells us, *That Chriſt committed the care of his Flock to St.* Peter, *and that the* POPE *or Biſhop of* Rome *is in this charge, St.* Peter's *Succeſſor, and that God aſſiſts thoſe who have this charge, with a particular helping Grace, ſuch as has a ſpecial reſpect to the Office and Function, and that ſuch as was given to the Prophets, and to* Moſes, *when he was made a God to* Pharoah. I cannot ſee, but it muſt be as conſequent to all this, that the POPE ſhould be *Infallible*, as that a *General Council* is ſo, eſpecially when it is his *Approbation* that gives *force* to its *Decrees.* Moreover, it is not eaſy to believe that *God* hath made a promiſe of *Infallible Aſſiſtance* to any number of *Paſtors* and *Prelates*, who are no better *qualified*, than he ſuppoſes they may moſt of them be, with *Pride, Ignorance*, and *Vice, Turbulence* and *Covetouſneſs*, and aſſembled, it may be, under an *Heretical Pope*, (for ſuch, 'tis granted he may be) and as *vicious* too, and

ignorant

ignorant as any of them. However, there are *two* things which make it very hard to find out this *Infalliblility*, where he ſends us to ſeek it, in a *General Council*: For *firſt*, they muſt be *lawfully aſſembled*; and *next*, they muſt *determine nothing contrary to what Chriſt and his Apoſtles taught*, otherwiſe *'tis damnable to receive their Determinations.* Now it will be hard for me to find out how *lawfully* they were *aſſembled*, and therefore as hard to *believe* all their *Decrees* as *Infallible*; and, I fear, I muſt not be allow'd to *examine* their *Definitions*, whether they be according to the *Doctrine* of *Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles*, or no, leſt I thereby ſeem to follow my own *private Judgment* or *Spirit*, rather than the *Infallible Judgment* of the *Church Repreſentative.* This is all then that I can learn from his Diſcourſe; I muſt take it for a *Truth*, that this *Infallibility* is lodg'd in a *General Council*, and that it can *determine* nothing *contrary* to the Doctrine of *Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles*; and then I need not *inquire* whether it have done ſo, or no; tho if it have done ſo, 'tis *damnable* for me to receive its *Determinations.* But I will hear what others tell me.

Bellarmin ſaith, *That all Catholicks are thus far agreed, That the* POPE, *as he is* POPE, *in the midſt of his Councellors, or together with a General* COUNCIL, *may Err, or Judg amiſs in matters of Fact.* And if this be true, he may even ſo *err* in the *whole Faith*, as far as I can yet ſee; for he may thus *err* in determining that there were ſuch *Men* as *Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles*; that any of them *Preached*, planted *Churches*, writ *Books*; that *theſe* are their *Books*, or that St. *Peter* was at *ROME*, and was *Biſhop* there; left the *Biſhops* of that *See* his *Succeſſors* in all his *Power*; that there hath been an uninterrupted *Succeſſion* of *Biſhops* in that *Church*; that any *unwritten Traditions* concerning *Faith* and *Manners* were left to the Cuſtody of the *Church*; and many more ſuch things, which were matters of *Fact*, and on which the *Faith* of that *Church* depends. Again he ſaith, *That the* POPE, *as a private Doctor, may Err, even through Ignorance, in matters both of Faith and Manners.*

Manners. And thus the *Church*, whether *Virtual* or *Repreſentative*, may *err*. But I would fain hear, wherein ſhe cannot *Err*, and whether all *Catholicks* are agreed as well in that.

The famous *Chancellor* of *Paris*, *Gerſon*, *Almain*, *Alphonſus a Caſtro*, the *Pariſian Doctors*, yea, and no leſs man than P. *ADRIAN* the VIth (ſaith the ſame *Author*) have taught, *That the* POPE, *as he is* POPE, *may be a Heretick, and teach Hereſy, when he defineth any thing without a General* COUNCIL. And truly, If *as a Man* he may be a *Heretick*, I ſee no reaſon why he may not be ſo *as a* POPE, for I take the *Man* and the POPE to be here *both one*. But further, theſe laſt named will have this *Infallibility* or *Judgment* to be in the *Council*, and not in the POPE. And *Bellarmin* tells us, *That this Opinion is not properly Heretical*, and for this good Reaſon (which if it ſhould not hold, they would loſe a great part of their *Church*) *becauſe they that hold it, are tollerated in the Church; yet it ſeems erroneous, and next a kin to Hereſie*. It ſhould ſeem by this, that an *Error tollerated* by the *Church* of ROME, is no *Hereſie*; but if *not tollerated*, it is. Indeed I know not well how ever ſhe can *Err Heretically* at this rate, unleſs ſhe will grow ſo *unkind* to *her ſelf*, as not to *tollerate* her own *Errors*.

The ſame *Jeſuit* tells us again, That it was the *Opinion* of *Albertus Pighius*, (and whether he was ſingular in it, or no, I ſhall not now ask) *That the* POPE *can by no means be a Heretick, or teach Hereſie publickly, altho himſelf alone define any thing without a Council*. And this *Opinion* he acknowledges to be *probable*, yet not *certain*. But I think 'tis very *certain* that POPES have been *Hereticks*, either as *condemned* by, or *condemning* one another for *Hereſie*.

Laſtly (he ſaith) *the moſt common Opinion, and that* for which he brings a multitute of *Authors*, is this, *That whether the* POPE *can be a Heretick or no, yet he cannot any way define any Heretical thing to be believ'd by the whole Church*. This he calls the *moſt ſure Opinion*, tho they who are of it,

ſeem not very well *agreed* among themſelves about it: For ſome of them ſay ſimply, *The* POPE *cannot err*: Others ſpeak it with this limitation, *Proceeding maturely with the advice of his Council.* But now, ſuppoſe he ſhould be too *haſty*, and define ſomething *raſhly* of his own head; Oh! That *cannot be*, (ſaith *Bellarmin*) *for God will not ſuffer it.* And yet I wiſh he could tell us, Why *God* may not as well ſuffer an *Heretical* POPE to define *raſhly*, or indeed rather *deliberately*, according to his own *Heretical Judgment*, as ſuffer him, to whom he hath committed the *Charge* of the *whole Flock*, to fall into *Hereſie.*

However, conſidering this *variety* of *Opinions* in the *Church* of *Rome*, concerning this *Infallible Judg*, to which all muſt be *ſubject* in Matters of *Religion*, I begin to think with my ſelf, with what *ſatisfaction* of *Conſcience* I ſhall be able to live in that *Communion.* I muſt obey the *Infallible Judg*, or elſe be *damn'd*: And who is this *Infallible Judg* whom I muſt obey? It is the *Church* of *ROME*; this all can tell me with one *conſent*; but tho this were true, yet am I no *wiſer* for it; that *whole Church* never yet met to *Judg* or *Determine* of any thing. Who is it then in this *Church*, to whoſe *Judgment* I muſt ſubmit? It is the POPE *alone*, ſay ſome; and yet theſe *ſome* are not agreed, whether he may not define ſome things *raſhly*, without due *advice*, at leaſt, when he is a *Heretick*, as ſome *Popes* have been, if *Popes* themſelves may be *believed*; and it ſeems not impoſſible, that an *Heretick*, *obſtinate* in *Error*, may define ſomething raſhly and unadviſedly. It is not the POPE, but a *General* COUNCIL, ſay others; and why theſe deſerve not as much *credit* as the *former*, I know not; for they are tolerated by the *Church*, and ſurely the *Infallible Church* will not for ſhame tolerate any *dangerous Error.* 'Tis neither the *One* nor the *Other*, ſaith a *Third Party*, but a POPE in COUNCIL, or a COUNCIL confirm'd by a POPE; and yet whether the *Determinations* of ſuch a *Church-Repreſentative* be of full virtue, till they have been univerſally receiv'd, is made a *Queſtion* by a *Fourth Party.* Where

Where are we now, after all this, to ſeek our *Infallible Judg?* Suppoſe a COUNCIL ſhould define it as a matter of *Faith*, that *the* POPE *himſelf is ſubject to a* COUNCIL; and again, *that a* POPE, yea a POPE in COUNCIL define the contrary, *that the* COUNCIL *is ſubject to the* POPE. This is no idle *Suppoſition* of an impoſſible or unlikely thing; for whoſoever knows what was done in the *Councils* of *CONSTANCE* and *BASIL*, conſiſting of as many *Patriarchs*, *Archbiſhops* and *Biſhops*, as moſt of the Councils ever did; and again, what afterwards paſs'd in the *Councils* of *FLORENCE*, and the *LATERAN*, under P. *LEO* the X*th*, muſt know that ſuch a thing, at leaſt, once came to paſs. Suppoſe then this which once was, and if the POPE could endure to think of a *Free Council*, might be again; what ſhould I have to ground any *certain Faith* upon? I muſt ſtill under Pain of *Damnation*, ſubmit my *Faith* to the *Judgment* of the *Church*. It is not, neither I believe ever will or can be agreed upon, which is the *Judgment* of the *Church*, that of the COUNCIL, or *this* of the POPE, or the *other* of POPE and COUNCIL. The *Conteſt* is between thoſe that will admit of no *Judg*, and therefore of no *Deciſion*. Their *Determinations* already extant, are directly contrary one to another, yet both pretended to be of *Faith*. That *both* cannot be ſo, is plain; and it may be *neither* is ſo. And whether the *one* or *neither* be ſo, if I would determine for my ſelf, I make my ſelf the *Judg* of the *Church's Definitions*, even of thoſe to which I muſt ſubmit my *Judgment*, or be *damn'd*.

The other Branch of *Power* claim'd by this *Church*, is that of giving *Laws* to all *Chriſtians*, unto which all that will be *ſaved*, muſt yield *Obedience*. About this I find no better *Agreement* among them, than about the *former*. *There is ſo great a diſpute among the Doctors* (ſaith one of them) *about the fulneſs of Eccleſiaſtical Power, and unto what things it extends it ſelf, that in this matter few things are ſecure.* Almain. de Auth. Eccleſ. c. 3. Yet that ſuch a *Power* there is, we muſt *believe*, or *periſh*,

tho none can certainly tell us what kind of *Power* it is, whether purely *Spiritual*, or *Temporal* alſo. And an *Univerſal Power* it muſt be, tho we cannot learn how far it reacheth, whether to *all*, or but *ſome*, either *things* or *perſons*.

It is held by many (ſaith *Bell.*) *that the* POPE *hath by Divine Right, a moſt full Power over the whole World, in Matters both Eccleſiaſtical and Civil.* And for this Opinion, he names *Auguſtinus Triumphus*, *Alvarus*, *Pelagius*, *Panormitan*, and others; with whom their *Angelical Doctor*, *Thomas* of *Aquine* ſeems to conſent; *In the* POPE (ſaith he) *is the Top-height of both Powers.*

Others ſay, *That the* POPE, *as* POPE, *hath no Temporal Power at at all, neither can any way command Secular Princes, or deprive them of their Kingdoms and Principalities, tho otherwiſe they deſerve to be deprived of them.* For this Opinion, he names not ſo much as *one* of their own *Communion*; why, I know not, unleſs it were, becauſe he knew it to be an Opinion very unwelcome at *ROME*; or becauſe he thought there were but a *few inconſiderable* PAPISTS that held it. And therefore he fathers it upon the *Hereticks*, whoſe *Loyalty* to their *Princes* will better bear it.

The REPRESENTER here tells us, *He knows that the Depoſing and King-killing Power has been maintained by ſome Canoniſts and Divines of his Church, and that it is in their Opinion lawful, and annex'd to the Papal Chair. And that ſome Popes have endeavour'd to act according to this Power.* Yet is he not willing that *Hereticks* of any ſort, ſhould carry away the *Honour*, which *Bellarmin* beſtow'd upon them, of a *Loyal Religion*; but ſaith, *That there are of his Communion three times the number, that publickly diſown all ſuch Authority; that ſome Univerſities and Provincial Councils, have condemn'd it; and that Popiſh Princes ſit as ſafe on their Thrones, as others.* Yea, and *he will engage, that all Catholick Nations in the World, ſhall ſubſcribe to the Condemnation of all ſuch Popiſh Principles and Doctrines, and ſhall join with all good Proteſtants for the extinguiſhing them, with all that profeſs and*

practice

practice them, and utter rooting them out of his Majesties three Kingdoms, and the whole Universe. I must do him right, notwithstanding all this; for he hath not said, That the *whole Church* of ROME, or any *General Council* hath condemn'd this *Doctrine*; or that it is by *publick Authority*, for the offence it gives, rased out of the *Canon-Law*, nor the LATERAN *Council*; nor that *Protestant Princes* can sit as safely in *Popish Countries*, as *Popish Princes* may in *Protestant Countries*. And when he tells us, *That the Sentence of the Supreme Pastor is to be obey'd, whether he be Infallible or no*; altho I have a great Opinion of the *Loyalty* of many PAPISTS, I durst hardly *engage* for *his*, if there should chance to be such a POPE again, as himself confesseth some have been.

But what saith *Bellarmin? A third sort there is, that takes a middle way*; and he names not a few of them, himself being one of the number. *These hold, that the* POPE, *as* POPE, *hath indeed no Temporal Power directly and immediately, but Spiritually only.* And such as he makes it, there needs no more; for it will serve his *Holiness* as *well*, and the *Hereticks* as *ill*, to all intents and purposes, yea even to the *deposing* of *Princes*, as the greatest *Temporal Power* in the World. For (saith he) *by reason of this Spiritual, he hath also, at least indirectly, a Temporal Power, and that no less than the highest. And even as the Spirit or Soul hath Power over the Flesh, to Chastise, and even to deliver it up to Death, in order to the Spiritual ends of the Soul: So also may the* POPE, *tho not as an ordinary Judg, yet as an extraordinary, in order to Spiritual Ends, change Kingdoms, taking them from one, and giving them to another, abrogate the Civil Laws of Princes, and determine of their Rights.* This I am sure is more than ever St. *Peter* had by Virtue, either of the *Rock*, or *Keys*, or *Pastoral Staff*; and I am confident, he never thought of half this, when he charged all Men to *submit to the King as* SUPREME, 1 *Pet.* 2. 13. Nor when, *v.* 17. bidding us *Honour all Men, love the Brotherhood, fear God, honour the King*; he omitted

omitted to mind us of the *great Duty* of all, the *Subjection* we muſt yield to his *Succeſſors*, the *Biſhops* of ROME; eſpecially, when he might well ſuppoſe we ſhould have been much apter to have learn'd it of *himſelf*, than of any of his *Succeſſors*.

'Tis time for me now, I think, to conſider, into what a *Labyrinth* I muſt run my ſelf, by going over to the *Church* of *ROME*; and how I can *behave* my ſelf, when I come there. I am going into a *Church*, out of which, I am told, there is no *Salvation*; yet I cannot foreſee, that this *Church* her ſelf can tell me ſurely, how I may be ſaved in it. Of this *Church*, I am told, I cannot be a Member to any purpoſe, if I be not in all things *Subject* and *Obedient* to the *Supreme Head* of it, the POPE. And ſubject to him I cannot be, if I *actively* obey not his *Commands*; for *paſſive Obedience* is now become the *deſpiſed Badg* of a *Heretick*. But what the POPE's *Power* to *command* is, I can meet with no Body that can certainly inform me. It is an *abſolute Power over all the World*, ſay ſome. *No*, (ſay others) but only *over Chriſtians*, and in things *Spiritual*. Well, (ſays the *third Party*) tho it be *directly and immediately only Spiritual*, yet it is no leſs for that; but in order to *Spirituals*, it reacheth over all, both *Temporal Perſons*, *Laws and Judgments*. All this *Power* is in me only, ſaith the POPE. You are too haſty, Sir, ſay ſome *Councils*, and the *Doctors* of *France*; for the *chief Power* is by *Chriſt* himſelf given to the *Council*, and even to *put down* and *ſet up* POPES, as *they* would deal with *Kings* and *Emperors*. Which of theſe now muſt I believe and obey?

The *Prince*, under whoſe Government I live, may command me one thing; and the POPE, my *Spiritual Father*, may command the *contrary*. How muſt I now do to bear my ſelf evenly betwixt two ſuch *Maſters*? I conſult my *Spiritual Guides*, and take the beſt *Advice* I can get; ſome ſay one thing, and ſome another; and which to believe, I ſtand

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in need of another *Guide* to direct me; nay, the *Church* it ſelf, knew I where to find her, (ſo *viſible* is She) could not tell me which is in the right. If I believe thoſe, who tell me the POPE has no *Power* in *Temporal* matters; then is my *Prince* in all ſuch Matters to be obey'd, ſay the POPE what he will to the contrary. If I hearken to them, that tell me the POPE has a *fulneſs* of *Power* in all, both *Temporal* and *Spiritual* matters; I muſt obey my *Prince* in nothing without the POPE's *leave*. If I liſten to them, who ſay, The POPE's *Power* in *Temporal* matters, is indeed the higheſt Power; yet *indirectly* only, and in order to *Spiritual ends*, then am I ſo far to obey it, and no farther. And here I am at as great a loſs as ever; for who ſhall judg for me, whether his *Commands* be needful for *Spiritual* ends or no? It is very unlikely, that my *Prince* and the *Pope* ſhould agree in the *Determination* of this Point; and the difference being between them *two*, and their *Commands*, to whoſe award will they ſtand? I muſt here neceſſarily be left to the *Direction* of my own, or ſome other *private Judgment*, and which ſide ſoever I take, it is an even Wager whether I can be *ſaved*.

I have been conſidering all this while for my ſelf alone, and the ſatisfaction of my own *Conſcience*. I preſume not to judg *for*, nor *of others*. They who have more *Light*, and better *Eyes*, may go on more *confidently*; 'tis all my care, to go ſafely for *my ſelf*; and as *inoffenſively* as I can to all others. I ſee many *Wiſe* men among ROMAN-CATHOLICKS, and I dare not ſay the contrary, but that they are of another *Religion* than I, becauſe they are *Wiſer*, and better able to *chuſe* than I. If I chuſe as *wiſely* as I can for my ſelf, I cannot do any better for my ſelf, and I doubt not of being ſaved whilſt I do ſo well. And if it ſhould prove ſo, that I chuſe the *worſe*, he hath no reaſon to be *angry* with me, to whom I leave, and do not grudg the *better*.

I cannot yet think it neceſſary to *Salvation*, to believe that

Church

Church Infallible, which not only in my opinion, but in the *Judgment* of all other *Christians*, (and they are more by one, and more) hath often *Erred*, and doth very grosly *Err* in many things; and which, if we ask her, can her self only tell us, who they be in her *Communion*, that *can Err*, but not who they be, that *cannot*. Nor can I think it *safe* to be of that *Church*, where I may not be allow'd to *judg* or *try*, whether *Error* be taught me or no. I cannot think I am bound to *judg* either my self or others in a state of *Damnation*, for not denying our *Senses*, or *captivating* our *Judgments* to the *Judgment* of an *Infallible Church*, which could never determine where her *Judgment* or *Infallibility* is certainly to be found: Or for not *obeying* the *Head* of that *Church*, which hath sometimes *no Head*, sometimes *many Heads*, and is *always uncertain which is her Head*, or where it *stands*. If I must thus *believe*, and thus *obey*, no body can tell me *what*, and declare I do all this, or in the Judgment of that *Church* which must be believ'd *Infallible*, be no better for turning PAPIST; then I verily think I am much *safer*, as I am a poor PROTESTANT. I am sure I may as *safely*, as I can *freely*, captivate my *Judgment* both in *Faith* and *Practice*, to the *Doctrine* and *Laws* of the *Blessed* JESUS, whom all *Christians* unanimously acknowledg both the SUPREME and INFALLIBLE HEAD of the *Universal Church*. I will no longer lose my labour, in seeking an *Infallible Guide*, which almost every body can tell me of, but no man can certainly shew me. Instead of an *Ecclesiastical Monarch* on *Earth*, I will content my self with that *Blessed and only Potentate*, *King of kings*, *and Lord of lords*, whom his Father hath made Sole *HEAD* of the CHURCH, which is his *Body*; who long since told us, that *his Kingdom is not of this World*, as, I fear, the *POPE's* too much is.

FINIS.

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